



THE ODYSSEY

HOMER



Illustrated by

Li Sidong



Retold by

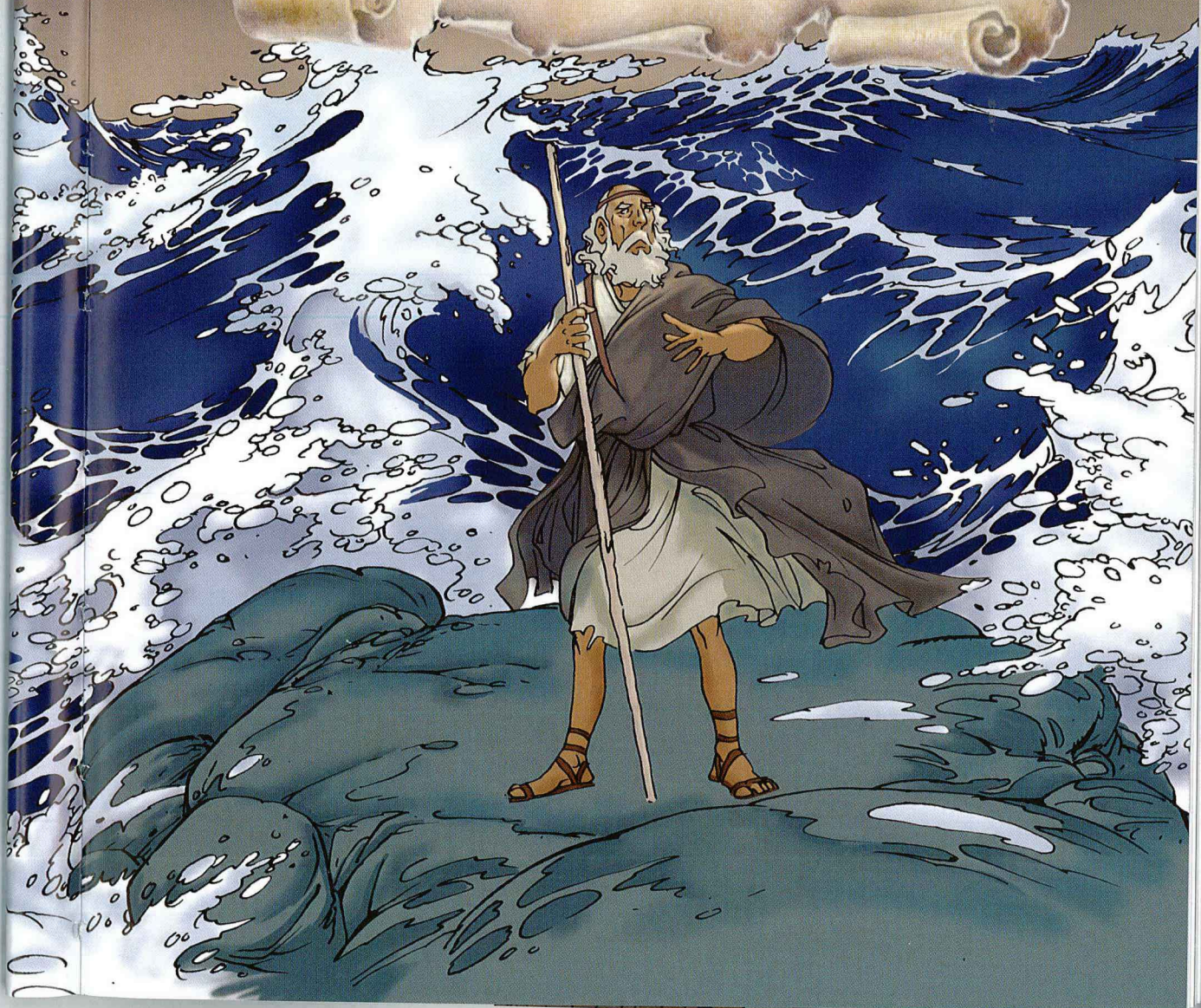
Fiona Macdonald

Series created and designed by

David Salariya

THE HERO of our story is Odysseus, who destroyed the mighty city of Troy by the trick of the wooden horse. On his way home he visited many countries and suffered many hardships. Poseidon, god of the sea, tried to prevent him from ever reaching home—but Odysseus would never give up.

I, HOMER, pray to the goddess of poetry to help me tell his story.



CHARACTERS*



Odysseus, prince
(later king) of Ithaca



Penelope, his wife



Telemachus, their son



Menelaus, king of Sparta



Agamemnon, high king
of the Greeks



Calypso, a goddess



Helen, wife of Menelaus
and lover of Paris



Paris, a prince of Troy



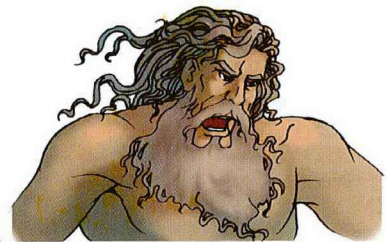
Circe, an enchantress



Aphrodite, goddess of
love

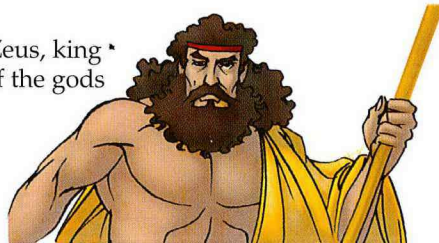


Athena, goddess of
wisdom and of war



Poseidon, god of the sea

Zeus, king
of the gods



Homer,
the greatest
Greek poet



INTRODUCING ODYSSEUS

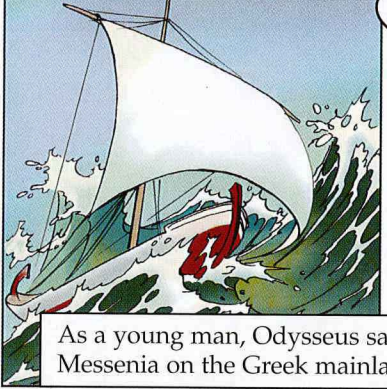
This is the story of the ancient Greek hero Odysseus. Centuries ago, I, Homer, told of his adventures in my famous poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.



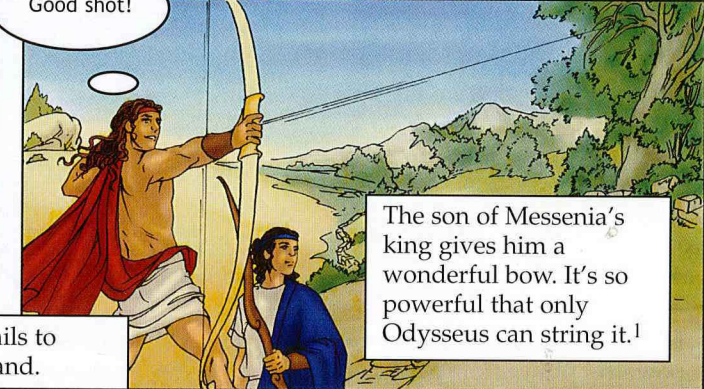
Odysseus is born on the Greek island of Ithaca,* where his father is king. As a child, Odysseus is badly hurt while hunting wild boar in the woods.



The scar on his thigh never fades.



As a young man, Odysseus sails to Messenia on the Greek mainland.



Good shot!

The son of Messenia's king gives him a wonderful bow. It's so powerful that only Odysseus can string it.¹

Odysseus grows up tough and strong—a natural leader, admired by everyone. He's clever, energetic, brave—and sometimes disobedient and headstrong.

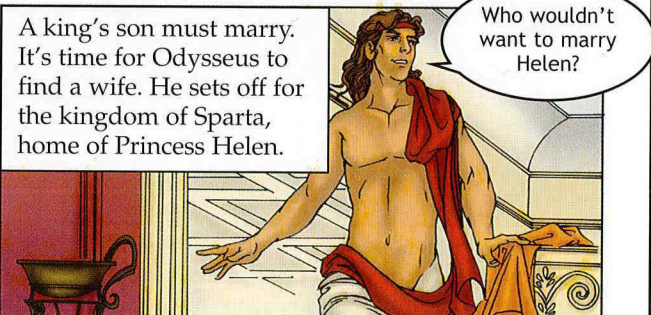


He's very intelligent!

He's not especially handsome, but he's friendly and interesting, with an entertaining way of talking.



A king's son must marry. It's time for Odysseus to find a wife. He sets off for the kingdom of Sparta, home of Princess Helen.



* For places mentioned in the story, see the map on pages 42–43.

1. only Odysseus can string it: The bow is so stiff that it's almost impossible to bend it so that the bowstring can be looped over the ends of the bow.

TWO WEDDINGS

Helen is no ordinary mortal. Her father is Zeus, mighty king of the gods. Her mother is Leda, a queen who fell in love with Zeus when he transformed himself into a swan. They say that Helen was hatched from a giant egg!

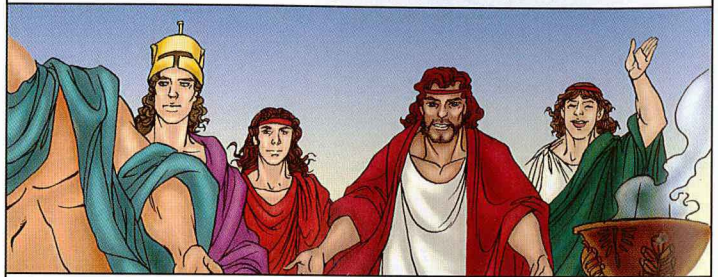


She's moving grace—a ray of golden light!

Now she's considered the most beautiful woman in the world.

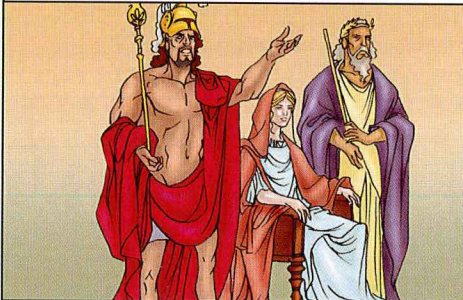


The king of Sparta is looking for a husband for Helen.



He's invited all the Greek princes to his court.

He chooses Menelaus, a rich and powerful prince from Mycenae.



Odysseus and all the other princes swear lifelong loyalty to Menelaus.

Odysseus is still determined to find a wife for himself.



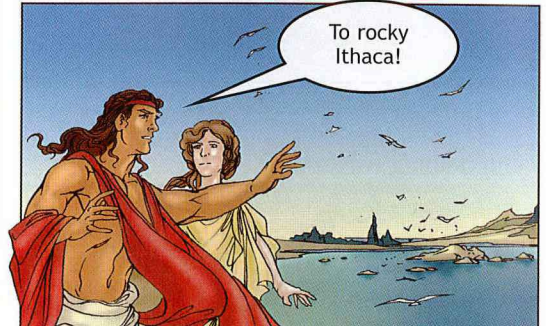
One whose heart and ways are kind...

He makes an excellent choice.




The lovely Penelope is wise, gracious, gentle, and loving. Her devoted family can hardly bear to let her go.

To rocky Ithaca!



The newly married couple leave for home, with hearts full of hope.

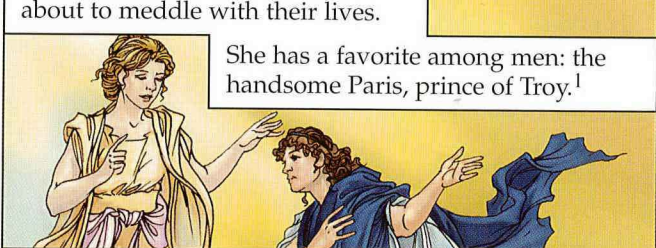
Menelaus is now king of Sparta.



He and Helen are happy together—but not for long...

Aphrodite, goddess of love, is about to meddle with their lives.

She has a favorite among men: the handsome Paris, prince of Troy.¹



Three powerful goddesses² have asked Paris to judge which of them is the most beautiful.



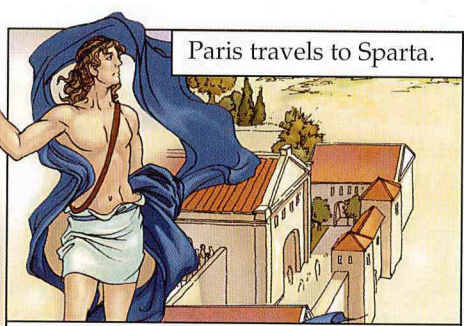
Hera

Athena

Aphrodite

I give the prize to Aphrodite!

Paris travels to Sparta.

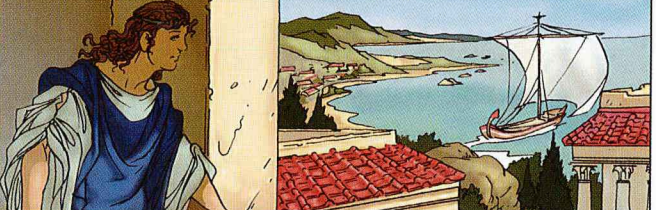


Aphrodite has bribed Paris by promising to make Helen fall in love with him. The other goddesses are furious, and plot revenge.


King Menelaus welcomes Paris and entertains him royally.



Aphrodite sends Menelaus away on an urgent mission.



Left alone, Paris and Helen fall passionately in love—just as Aphrodite promised!

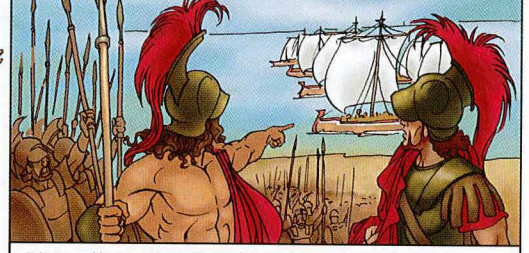


Paris is as handsome as a god!

Helen's a goddess among women!

They run away together to Troy.

Menelaus is furious.



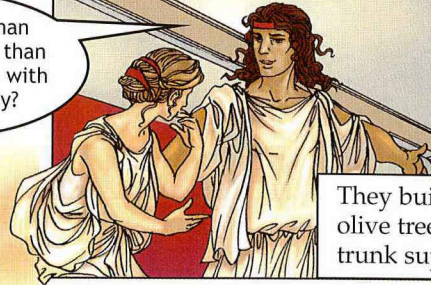
He calls on his brother Agamemnon—great warrior, great king—and all the Greek princes to go to war against Troy.

1. Troy: a splendid city and kingdom in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).
 2. Three powerful goddesses: Hera, wife of Zeus; Athena, goddess of wisdom and of warfare; Aphrodite, goddess of love.

THE MADNESS OF ODYSSEUS

Meanwhile, Odysseus and Penelope live very happily on the island of Ithaca.

Where can a man find greater joy than in his own home with his own family?



They build their house around an ancient olive tree. It shelters and protects them; its trunk supports their marriage bed.



The years pass peacefully...

Telemachus, our son!

Light of my life!

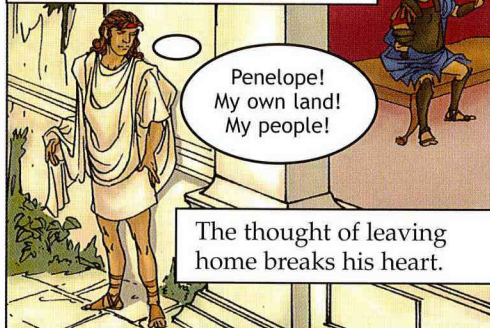


... until one fateful day when a stranger arrives with a terrible message.



An order from King Menelaus!

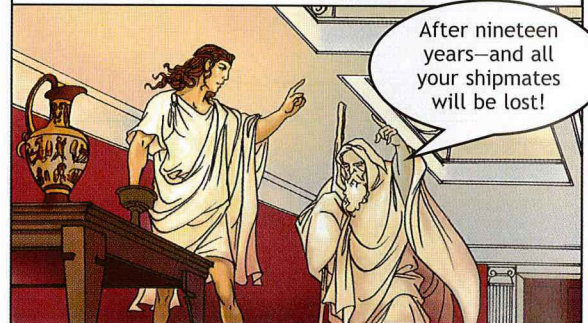
It's war against Troy! Odysseus must keep his promise to support Menelaus.



Penelope! My own land! My people!

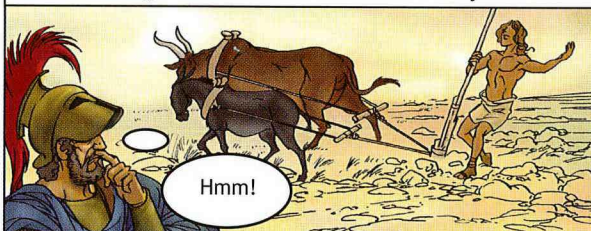
The thought of leaving home breaks his heart.

When will he return? The palace seer¹ foretells a grim future.



After nineteen years—and all your shipmates will be lost!

Odysseus pretends to be mad to escape his duty. He tries to plow with an ox and a donkey.



Hmm!

Of course, the two animals won't work together.

The messenger is suspicious. He catches sight of Odysseus's baby son.



Aha!

10 1. seer: a wise man or magician who can foretell the future.

He snatches Telemachus and throws him in front of the plow!



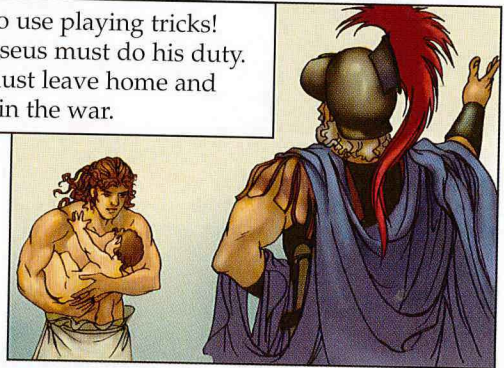
Odysseus dashes to the rescue...



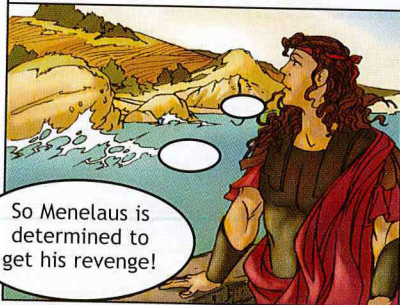
... and proves that he is not mad after all!



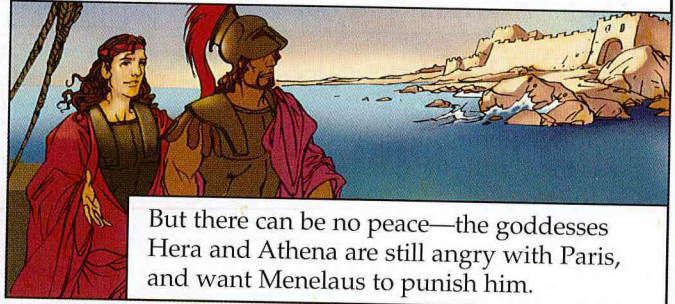
It's no use playing tricks! Odysseus must do his duty. He must leave home and fight in the war.



Odysseus sails away to join the great army.

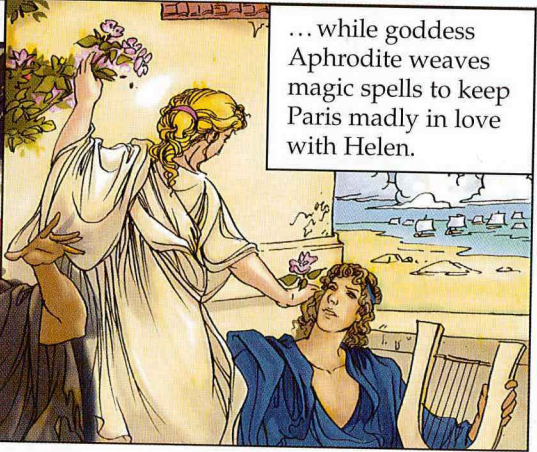
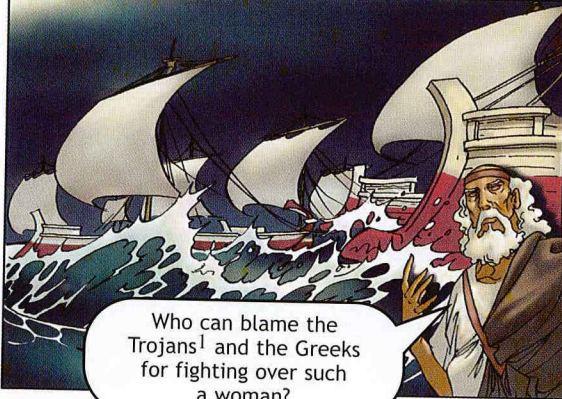


Together, Odysseus and Menelaus go to find Paris. They try to arrange peace.



But there can be no peace—the goddesses Hera and Athena are still angry with Paris, and want Menelaus to punish him.

The Greeks arrive off the coast of Troy...

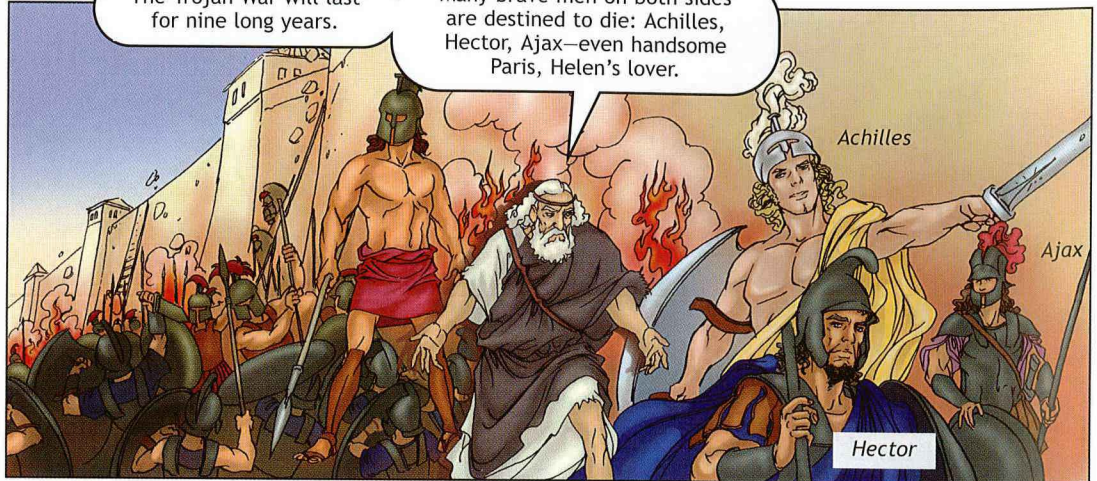


1. Trojans: people of Troy.

THE TROJAN WAR

The Trojan War will last for nine long years.

Many brave men on both sides are destined to die: Achilles, Hector, Ajax—even handsome Paris, Helen's lover.



Athena and Hera fill the Greeks with hatred of the Trojans.



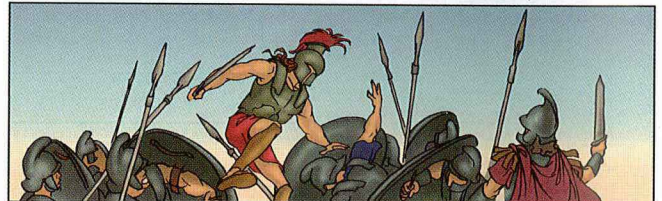
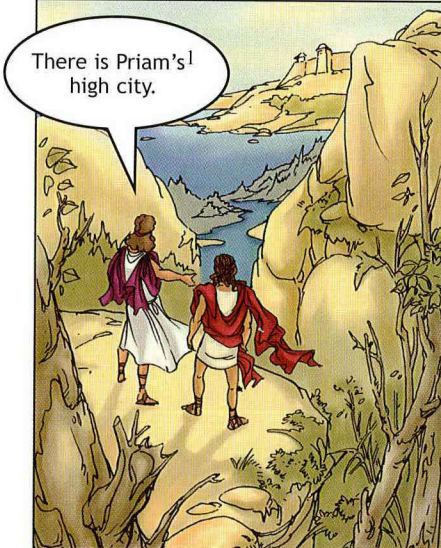
Aphrodite takes the Trojans' side.

Odysseus is Athena's favorite.



With her help, he persuades the young hero Achilles to join in the fight.

Helped by Athena, Odysseus cures the wounded King Telephus. In return, Telephus shows the Greeks the quickest way to Troy.



Odysseus kills seven men in one fight. He steals wonderful warhorses from the king of Thrace.²



1. Priam: the elderly king of Troy, and father of Paris.

2. Thrace: a country which included parts of present-day Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Serbia, and Macedonia.

In a nighttime raid, he captures a dangerous Trojan spy.

Answer my questions!

Don't kill me! I'll pay a ransom!¹

When the Greek hero Achilles is killed by Paris, Odysseus carries back the body from the battlefield.

He was godlike and glorious!

He captures a Trojan seer and makes him reveal crucial secrets.

Fetch the holy bones of Pelops!²

Summon Philoctetes!³

Steal the Palladium⁴ from Troy's great temple!

Last of all, Athena sends Odysseus a brilliant idea:

It's a trick!

It's a gift of thanks to Athena!

The Greeks must make a huge, hollow wooden horse.

Thinking that the horse might please the angry goddess Athena, the Trojans drag it into their city.

But during the night, twelve of the best Greek warriors leap out of the horse! They fling open Troy's gates and the Greek army rushes in. Troy is destroyed, and all its people slaughtered or captured as slaves.

And all by Athena's power!

1. ransom: money paid for the release of a prisoner. This was a normal part of warfare in ancient and medieval times.
 2. Pelops: a dead hero, and ancestor of many famous warriors.
 3. Philoctetes: a fierce fighter who guards the deadly bow and arrows belonging to the superhuman Heracles (Hercules).
 4. Palladium: a sacred robe with magic, protective powers.

HOMeward BOUND

The long war is over. Odysseus is older, wiser, sadder. Now, more than anything else in the world, he wants to go home to Ithaca, to Penelope and Telemachus.



Ithaca! There is nowhere on earth I love better!



Odysseus has been away for ten terrible years.



Home and family! How I long to see them!

Westward, away from Troy!



He sets sail with a fleet of twelve ships.

The winds blow them to a city on the coast of Thrace.



It's the home of our enemies, the Ciconians!

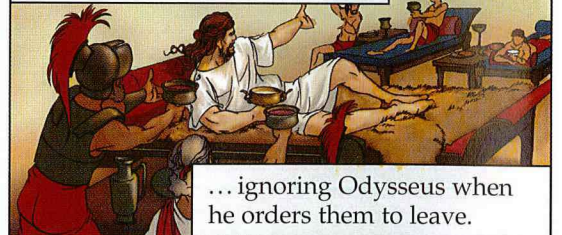
Odysseus defeats the Ciconians. Only one priest, Maron, survives.



In return for sparing his life, Maron gives them some rare magic wine.



The sailors feast greedily...



... ignoring Odysseus when he orders them to leave.

Too late! The Ciconian army arrives.



Six seats are empty in each ship!

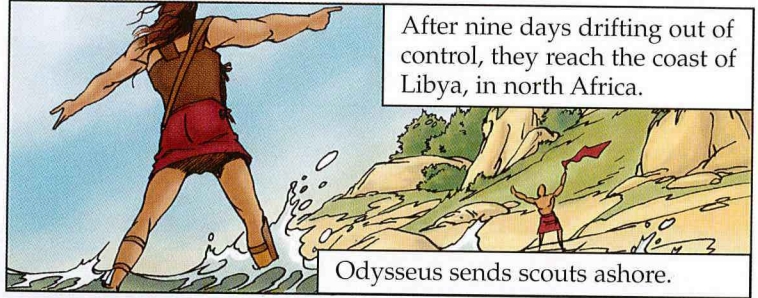


Seventy-two of Odysseus's men are killed. The rest just manage to escape.

Zeus, king of the gods, is angry with Odysseus's men for attacking the Ciconians. He sends a terrible storm.

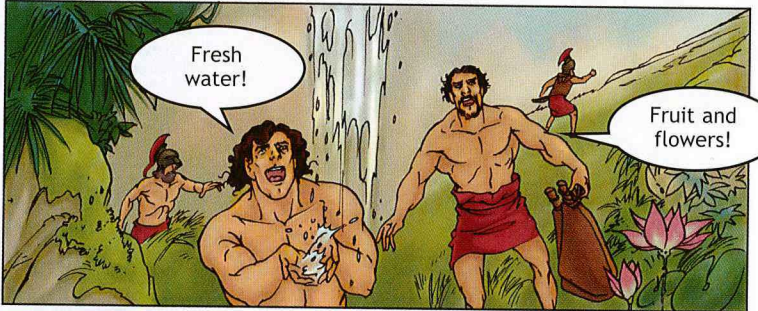


We face death in this raging sea!



After nine days drifting out of control, they reach the coast of Libya, in north Africa.

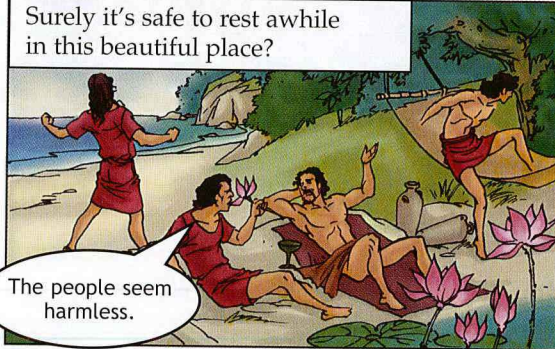
Odysseus sends scouts ashore.



Fresh water!

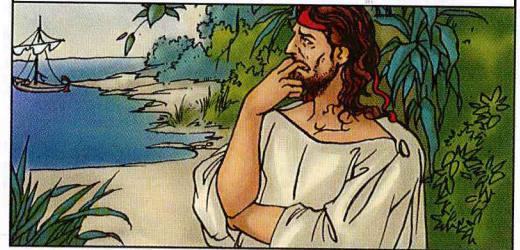
Fruit and flowers!

Surely it's safe to rest awhile in this beautiful place?



The people seem harmless.

But this is the land of the Lotus-Eaters. If they eat the magic lotus flowers, they'll forget everything—even who they are!

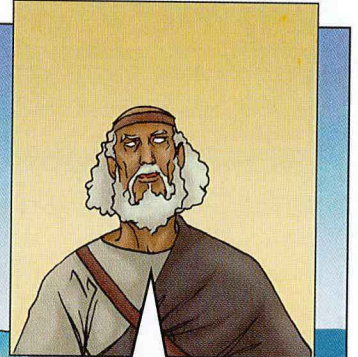


The scouts eat the flowers and stagger back to the beach, confused and forgetful. They call for the other sailors to join them. Lazy, hazy lotus-eating is delightful!



Woo-hoo!

Come and try it!



Only the wise Odysseus realizes the danger. He orders them back on board, but the scouts aren't listening.