The Adventures of Odysseus, Hugh Lupton, Daniel Morden and Christina Balit

In this retelling of Homer’s epic poem The Odyssey, tells the story of Odysseus’s return home to Ithica from fighting in the Trojan wars. His journey is beset by danger, challenges and tragedy. Each of the stories in the book would stand alone as short stories, but they also work as a complete sequence, in which Odysseus tells the story of his travels and then finally returns home, to yet more challenges.

The stories cover themes of good and evil, the nature of heroism, taking responsibility for our actions within a classic voyage and return narrative.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.
- To explore
- To develop children’s skills as storytellers

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 5 or 6 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence
This teaching sequence is approximately 4 weeks long if spread out over 20 sessions. The book supports teachers to both read and write a sequential adventure narrative, explore characterisation

National Curriculum objectives covered by this sequence

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<tr>
<th>Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)</th>
<th>Writing: (Transcription / Composition)</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes</td>
<td>▪ identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own</td>
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<td>▪ reading aloud to children should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves.</td>
<td>▪ noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary</td>
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<td>▪ Identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing</td>
<td>▪ in writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what they have read, listened to or seen performed</td>
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<td>▪ making comparisons within and across books</td>
<td>▪ in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action</td>
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<td>▪ checking the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context</td>
<td>▪ assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing</td>
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<td>▪ ask questions to improve their understanding</td>
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### Speaking and Listening:

- draw inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
- summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
- participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others’ ideas and challenging views courteously
- explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
- provide reasoned justifications for their views

### Cross Curricular Links:

**Music**

- National Curriculum link: Children should play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression and improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music.
- Set the song in Chapter 1 to atmospheric music over which to narrate
- Recreate the Syrens’ song, The Song of the Spheres.

**History**
- National Curriculum link: Children should be taught about Ancient Greece – a study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world.
- The study of The Adventures of Odysseus could form part of a much larger study of Ancient Greece, which would allow or much more in-depth contextualisation of the stories.

**Art**
- National Curriculum link: Children should be taught to improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of material
- Investigate narratives and scenes on Ancient Greek amphorae. Making Greek pots or tiles using earthenware clay with black paint to illustrate a scene from The Odyssey. Sculpt a clay figure of a hero, heroine, god or monster.

**Teaching Approaches**
- Tell me – booktalk
- Reading aloud
- Visual approaches
- Drawing, mapping and annotating
- Shared writing
- Writing in role
- Roleplay
- Readers’ theatre
- Comparison charts
- Storyboarding
- Storytelling
- Debate and argument

**Writing Outcomes**
- Information posters
- Letters
- Annotated storyboards
- Diaries
- Speeches
- Notes for a debate
- Story writing
- Newspaper articles

**Links to other texts:**
- *Greek Myths, The Iliad and The Odyssey* – all three retold and illustrated by Marcia Williams.
- The Orchard Book of Greek Myths, Geraldine McCaughrean
- The Odyssey, Homer
- The Iliad, Homer
- The Fire Thief trilogy, Terry Deary.

**Weblinks**
- [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/ancient_greeks/sea_and_ships/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/ancient_greeks/sea_and_ships/)
Teaching Sessions

Session 1&2: Tell me – booktalk, reading aloud, research

- Read aloud The Prologue, though do not show the children the book cover or tell them the title of the book.
- Use the Tell me questions below to open a discussion about thoughts and feelings so far – what do you like about the story so far? What do you dislike? What type of story is this and how do we know that? What puzzles you about this opening section? Does this opening remind you of any other stories you know? What are the similarities between this story and ones you already know?
- Ask the children to create, in small groups, mind maps of everything they already know about Greek mythology and prepare a short oral presentation to the rest of the class.
- Gather, discuss and explore the meanings of unknown words eg. diadem.
- Ask the children to present their prior knowledge about Greek mythology to each other or share their knowledge with at least one other group.
- In session 2, children will research the Greek gods and goddesses mentioned in the Prologue (Zeus, Hera, Athene, Aphrodite, Hermes and Poseidon who we are going to meet later in the Adventures of Odysseus) and create an information poster about their chosen god or goddess. Create a class display on the Greek gods.

Session 3&4: reading aloud, visual approaches, drawing, mapping and annotation, writing in role

- Show children the front cover to The Adventures of Odysseus. Ask them to make predictions about the character of Odysseus and to give reasons for their predictions.
- As a class, start to create a role on the wall for Odysseus (this can be added to over time as we learn more about the character of Odysseus, and discover the character who is at times foolish and rash as well as brave and admirable.
- Read aloud to the class Chapter One – The Stranger.
- Discuss what we know about Odysseus now that we can add to our role on the wall.
- Move onto discussing Penelope. What do we know about Penelope? What sort of a character is she? How would she have coped with the trials over the 19 years she had to put up with the suitors?
• Ask children to draw an image of Penelope at her loom, looking out to sea, or with her suitors, and annotate it. Gather children together to share their drawings.

• In session four, ask children to write a letter in character as Odysseus writing to his wife Penelope or son Telemachus as he set off to war. *How would he feel about going away with either the possibility of being away a long time or even not returning at all if he is killed in the war? How would he explain this to his family and justify his decision? What are the key things he would want to tell his family?*

• Read Chapter Two – *The Cyclops* before the next session.

**Session 5&6: Readers’ theatre, reading aloud, shared writing, storyboarding and storytelling, Tell me - booktalk**

• Re-read pages 22-25 and discuss the Cyclops story – a short tell me session in which you discuss the children’s likes and dislikes and in particular any puzzles they have about the story.

• Explain to the children they are going to be creating a short play out of the interaction between the Cyclops and Odysseus’s men.

• Give children copies of pages 22-25 and model writing the opening of this scene as a play script, encouraging the children to edit the script as you produce it and add in stage directions for clarity.

• Children to continue writing the script and in groups of four or five.

• In groups, children to perform their short plays and children not acting to propose freeze frames and question the different characters as to their feelings and thoughts at that particular time in the action.

• Discuss the Cyclops’s rant to Poseidon. Ask the children to predict what is going to happen following Odysseus’s reaction, laughing at the Cyclops.

• In session six discuss with children the key events in the story of the Cyclops and list them as a class.

• Ask the children to create an annotated storyboard with a partner to tell the story and then to use their storyboard to retell the story orally to each other.

• Explain storytelling was an important form of entertainment for the Ancient Greeks; stories were usually told in the form of poetry. Refer to chapter one *The Stranger*. Reread the beginning of the poem told by the storyteller. As a shared writing activity create a couple of lines to preface the story of the Cyclops.

• In pairs, practice telling the story orally to each other and prepare the story as a presentation, either for the class of for children in another year group.

• Before the next session read aloud *Chapter Three – The Sack of the Winds*.

**Session seven and eight: storytelling, shared writing, writing in role, mapping, drawing and annotating**

• Ask children in pairs to recap on the events of the story *The Sack of Winds*.

• Show children pictures of a range of violent sea storm scenes (both photographs and paintings). Explain they are going to be painting the scene in which the ship is engulfed by the
storm, depicting the characters on the deck of the ship. Use mixed media of paints, oils and collage to create sea storm pictures to depict this scene and display in the classroom.

- In session eight, explain to the children they are going to write the diary entry of one of the crew members travelling home to Ithica. Discuss how they would have felt coming within sight of the island and then their feelings on the storm, about having brought their own fates upon themselves by looking in the sack and their feeling of being torn away from their homes when they were within sight of their home shore.
- Add to the role on the wall of Odysseus with new information about him (especially the children’s impressions of him bringing the storm upon himself through his gloating).
- Read Chapter Four – Circe before the next session.

Sessions 8&9: reading aloud, drawing, mapping and annotating, writing poetry

- Read aloud Chapter Five – Land of the Dead.
- Discuss the crew’s decent into the land of the dead. Gather the emotive words, the standout phrases from the story (gurgling children, gaping gashes, hungry wraiths etc) in a class collection displayed to all.
- Explain the children are going to write a diary entry for Odysseus as he sees the face of his mother among the dead. How would he have felt at this point in the story? How would he feel about bringing his crew to this place.
- In session nine, explain to the children they are going to look at the story from another perspective, that of the crew and the dead themselves, and are going to be writing a poem in two parts, one which is the voices of Odysseus’s crew and the other the voices of the dead, in alternating verses, to perform.
- Model writing the first two stanzas of a choral poem for the class and then in small groups, children draft and develop their own choral performance poem, exploring the emotions and thoughts of the living approaching the dead and the dead approaching the living.
- Perform the poem in groups and peer-assess each other’s performances.

Session 10: Reading aloud, descriptive writing

- Read aloud Chapter Six – Song of the Spheres.
- Ask the children what the Song of the Spheres might sound like to Odysseus, how they could imagine it and describe it. Gather some adjectives might help the children in their own writing.
- Explain to the children they are going to be doing some descriptive writing from the point of view of Odysseus trying to explain to his crew after they had unblocked their ears the music of the Sirens? Play the class some music which they are likely to be unfamiliar with (perhaps something quite ethereal – something from Debussy’s Peleas et Melisande?). In pairs, children gather words to describe the piece of music and also discuss what Odysseus’s reaction to the Siren’s music would have been – how would he have share words to describe.
- Children to write a short speech for Odysseus to make to his men about the Song of the Spheres and some children to perform theirs to the class.
Session 11 and 12: Debate, reading aloud, drawing, mapping and annotating

- Read aloud Chapter Seven – Torment and Trial.
- Explain to the children we are going to hold a class debate over what Odysseus should have done in this situation – should he have sacrificed his men or warned them of the danger they faced? Should they have been given their own choice to decide on the danger?
- Set half the class on one side of the argument and half on the other. Give the groups time to prepare their arguments and responses and hold a class debate with the teacher, or a child as the chairperson.
- In session 12, re-read the sections of the story about the two dangers, the Charybdis and the Scylla. Discuss these two perils and ask the children to draw in oil pastels either the Charybdis or the Scylla.
- Find time to read as a class Chapter Eight – Shipwrecked before the next session.

Session 13 and 14: Storytelling, reading aloud, mapping

- Read aloud Chapters Nine and Ten – Ithica and Father and Son
- Discuss the original Odyssey, by Homer, an epic poem which told the same story and which was not written down, but was remembered. Challenge the children to recall as many of the events that occurred (and the order in which they occurred) to sequence the story.
- Give the children copies of the illustrations that run throughout the book and using these as an aide, ask the children in pairs to tell the story in order, and take turns to summarise each episode.
- In session 14, children to create a map of the different places he has been and the people, gods and monsters he has encountered.

Session 15: role-play, writing in role, shared writing, reading aloud

- Read aloud Chapter 11 – The Beggar.
- Explain to the children they are going to be writing the story of Odysseus returning home as a beggar, writing in role.
- Re-read the chapter stopping to chart Odysseus’s feelings as the story is told to him, from anger, love, fear, wisdom, regret.
- Discuss as a class Odysseus’s feelings on returning to his home. One child to role-play Odysseus and the other children to formulate questions for him about how he felt on returning home after all his misfortunes to find only more misfortunes, about not being able to return to his house immediately and about the dangers that his family had faced while he had been away.
- Ask the children to write the story from Odysseus’s perspective as he heard the story being told to him by Antinous.
- Read aloud Chapters 12 and 13 – Setting the Trap and Springing the Trap before the next session.
### Session 16 and 17: Freeze frame, Report writing

- Discuss the events of the two chapters, 12 and 13, the bloody nature of the events and the children’s reactions to them.
- Working in groups, ask children to choose a scene from the end of the story to freeze-frame (for example, the drunken suitors and Odysseus as a beggar and the test). Ask children to write a caption for their freeze frame. If possible take photos of the freeze frames so that children can refer to them later.
- Ask the children to write a newspaper report of the day Odysseus challenged the suitors. Discuss newspaper conventions to remind children of journalistic bias (and discuss whether you want to create biased reports or straight factual news reports).

### Session 18/19/20: storytelling, shared writing, narrative writing

- Read aloud Chapter 14 – The Olive Tree.
- Explain to the children they are going to write the story of Odysseus taking the oar inland to where it would be mistaken for a winnowing fan.
- In small groups, children to mind map different options for this story and whether it is going to be straight-forward, or contain more peril and adventure for Odysseus. Will the event involve any more encounters with gods or monsters. Children to orally rehearse ideas for their additional chapter in groups of three.
- Shared write the opening of a new chapter.
- Over the three sessions, plan, draft and rewrite an additional chapter in the style of the stories in The Adventures of Odysseus. In the final session, children to illustrate the chapter with an opening picture, as happens in the book.
- Share some of the different stories the children have created and discuss whether they would fit as an additional chapter to this book.