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**Interactively read the article below!**

Homer is the name of the Greek poet who wrote the epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey. Not much is known about him, or even if he was a real person. Some people think it was really a group of people who made those poems. Other people think Homer was really a woman. According to legend, Homer was a blind poet who lived in Ionia. It is thought that he lived in the 8th century BCE. Most modern scholars think the Iliad was written in the second half of the 8th century BCE.

The Iliad is, along with the Odyssey, one of the two major Greek epic poems traditionally attributed to Homer, written in Greece about 700–650 BC.

The poem is embedded in the Trojan War between the Greeks and Trojans. It tells the story from the wrath of Achilles, to the death and funeral of Hector and the siege of Troy.

The Iliad was followed by the Odyssey, maybe also written by Homer.

Some important characters in the Iliad are Achilles, Odysseus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Priam, Hector, Paris, and Helen.

The Odyssey is, along with the Iliad, one of the two major Greek epic poems traditionally said to be written by Homer. It is said to be written in Greece about 900 BC.

The poem is the story about Odysseus's ten-year-long voyage home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. (Most of the Trojan War is told in the Iliad.) At the same time, his wife Penelope has to fight off a lot of men who want to marry her; and his son Telemachos searches for him.

Along the way, Odysseus and his men have to fight monsters and many other dangers.

1. Who was Homer? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the Iliad? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the Odyssey? \_\_\_\_\_

**THE CYCLOPS**

-a chapter from the epic poem, the Odyssey, by Homer

Late one day a Greek sailor named Odysseus came with his ships to an island, and found in it a beautiful harbor, with a stream falling into it, and a flat beach on which to draw up the ships. That night he and his men slept by the ships, and the next day they made a great feast. The island was full of wild goats. The men hunted and killed the goats, using their spears and bows. They had been on shipboard for many days, and had had little food. Now they had plenty, eight goats to every ship, and

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nine for the ship of Odysseus, because he was the chief. So they ate till they were full, and slept well and late.

Now there was another island about a mile away, and they could see that it was larger, and it seemed as if there might be people living in it. The island where they were had no one else living on it. So on the second morning Odysseus said to his men: "Stay here, my dear friends; I with my own ship and a small group of men will go to this other island, and find out who lives there, whether they are good people or not."

So he and his men took their ship, and rowed over to the other island. Then Odysseus took twelve men, the bravest that there were in the ship, and went to search out the country. He took with him wine, very strong and sweet, which the priest of Apollo had given him for saving him and his house and family, when Troy was taken. There never was a more precious wine; the smell of it was wondrously sweet. Also he took with him some dry grain, for he felt in his heart that he might need some food.

After a while they came to a cave which seemed to be the home of some rich and skilled shepherd. Inside there were pens for the young sheep and the young goats, and baskets full of cheeses, and milk bottles ranged against the walls. Then Odysseus' men said to him: "Let us go away before the master comes back. We can take some of the cheeses, and some of the young goats and lambs." But Odysseus would not listen to them. He wanted to see what kind of man this shepherd might be, and he hoped to get something from him.

In the evening the Cyclops came home. He was a great giant, with one big eye in the middle of his forehead, and an eyebrow above it. He bore on his shoulder a huge bundle of pine logs for his fire. This he threw down outside the cave with a great crash, and drove the flocks inside, and then closed up the mouth with a big rock so big that twenty wagons could not carry it. After this he milked the ewes and the she-goats. Half the milk he curdled for cheese, and half he set aside for his own supper. This done, he threw some logs on the fire, which burnt up with a great flame, showing the Greeks, who had fled into the depths of the cave, when they saw the giant come in.

"Who are you?" said the giant, "traders or pirates?"

"We are no pirates, mighty sir," said Odysseus, "but Greeks sailing home from Troy, where we have been fighting for Agamemnon, the great king, whose fame is spread abroad from one end of heaven to the other. And we beg you to show hospitality to us, for the gods love them who are hospitable."

"Nay," said the giant, "talk not to me about the gods. We care not for them, for we are better and stronger than they. But tell me, where have you left your ship?"

But Odysseus saw what he was thinking of when he asked about the ship, namely, that he meant to break it up so as to leave them no hope of getting away. So he said, "Oh, sir, we have no ship; that which we had was driven by the wind upon a rock and broken, and we whom you see here are all that escaped from the wreck."

The giant said nothing, but suddenly caught up two of the men, as a man might catch up two puppies, and threw them on the ground, and tore them limb from limb, and ate them up, with huge

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gulps of milk between, leaving not a bite left, not even the bones. And when he had filled himself with this horrible food and with a lot of milk, he lay down among his sheep, and slept.

Then Odysseus thought: "Shall I slay this monster as he sleeps, for I think that I can stab him in the heart. But no; if I do this, then I and my men will surely die here, for who shall be able to roll away the great rock that is laid against the mouth of the cave?"

So he waited till the morning, very sad at heart. And when the giant woke up, he milked his sheep, and afterward took two of the men, and ate them up as before. This done, he went forth to the fields, his flocks following him, but first he put the giant rock on the entrance to the cave.

All day Odysseus thought about how he might save himself and his men, and the main idea of his thinking was this. There was a great pole in the cave, the trunk of an olive tree, green wood which the giant was going to use as a staff for walking. Odysseus cut off a piece from this tree trunk some six feet long, and hid it away. In the evening the giant came back and did as before, seizing two of the prisoners and devouring them. When he had finished his meal, Odysseus came to him with the jug of honey water in his hand and said, "Drink, Cyclops, now that you have eaten. Drink this honey water, and see what good things we had in our ship."

The Cyclops took the skin and drank, and was really pleased with the honey water.

"Give me more," he said, "and tell me your name, and I will give you a. Truly this is a fine drink, as sweet as that which the gods have in heaven."

Then Odysseus cleverly said: "My name is No Man. And now give me your gift."

And the giant said: "My gift is this: you shall be eaten last." And as he said this, he fell back in a drunken sleep.

Then Odysseus said to his companions, "Be brave, my friends, for the time is come for us to be rescued from this prison."

So they put the stake into the fire, and kept it there till it was ready, green as it was, to burst into flame. Then they thrust it into his eye, for, as has been told he had only one eye, and Odysseus leant with all his force upon the stake, and turned it about, just as a man turns a drill about when he would make a hole in a ship timber. And the wood hissed in the eye as the red-hot iron hisses in the water when a smith would temper it to make a sword.

Then the giant leapt up, and tore away the stake, and cried out so loudly that the Round-eyed people in the island came to see what had happened.

"What hurts you," they asked, "that you make so great a noise, waking us all out of our sleep? Is any one stealing your sheep, or seeking to hurt you?"

And the giant bellowed, "No Man is hurting me."

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"Well," said the Round-eyed people, "if no man is hurting you, then it must be the gods that do it, and we cannot help you against them."

But Odysseus laughed when he thought how he had tricked them all with his fake name. But he was still in doubt how he and his companions should escape, for the giant sat in the mouth of the cave, and felt to see whether the men were trying to get out among the sheep. And Odysseus, after long thinking, made a plan by which he and his companions might escape. By great good luck the giant had driven the sheep into the cave, for he often left them outside. These sheep were very big and strong, and Odysseus took six of the biggest, and tied the six men that were left out of the twelve underneath their bellies with twigs. And on each side of the six sheep to which a man was tied, he put another ram. So he himself was left, for there was no one who could do the same for him. Yet this also he managed. There was a very big ram, much bigger than all the others, and to this he clung, grasping the fleece with both his hands. So, when the morning came, the flocks went out of the cave as they usually did, and the giant felt them as they passed by him, and did not notice the men. And when he felt the biggest ram, he said—

"How is this? You do not usually lag behind; you are always the first to run to the pasture in the morning and to come back to the fold at night. Perhaps you are troubled about thy master's eye which this villain No Man has destroyed. First he overcame me with wine, and then he put out my eye. Oh! That you could speak and tell me where he is! I would dash out his brains upon the ground." And then he let the big ram go.

When they were out of the giant's reach, Odysseus let go his hold of the ram, and loosed his companions, and they all made as much haste as they could to get to the place where they had left their ship, looking back to see whether the giant was following them. The crew at the ship were very glad to see them, but wondered that there should be only six. Odysseus made signs to them to say nothing, for he was afraid that the giant might know where they were if he heard their voices. So they all got on board and rowed with all their might. But when they were a hundred yards from the shore, Odysseus stood up in the ship and shouted: "You are an evil beast, Cyclops, to devour strangers in your cave, and are rightly served in losing your eye. May the gods make you suffer worse things than this!"

The Cyclops, when he heard Odysseus speak, broke off the top of a rock and threw it to the place from which the voice seemed to come. The rock fell just in front of the ship, and the wave which it made washed it back to the shore. But Odysseus caught up a long pole and pushed the ship off, and he nodded with his head, being afraid to speak, to his companions to row with all their might. So they rowed; and when they were twice as far off as before, Odysseus stood up again in the ship, as if he were going to speak again. And his comrades begged him to be silent.

"Do not make the giant angry," they said; "we were almost lost just now when the wave washed us back to the shore. The monster throws a mighty bolt, and throws it far."

But Odysseus would not listen, but cried out: "Hear, Cyclops, if any man ask you who put out your eye, say that it was Odysseus of Ithaca."

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Then the giant took up another great rock and threw it. This time it almost touched the end of the rudder, but missed by a hand's breadth. This time, therefore, the wave helped them on. So big was it that it carried the ship to the other shore.

Now Odysseus had not forgotten to carry off sheep from the island for his companions. These he divided among the crews of all the ships. The great ram he had for his own share. So that day the whole company feasted, and they lay down on the sea-shore and slept.