Introduction to *The Odyssey*

Learn it, Love it, Live it: This stuff will be on a test!
I wonder who wrote *The Odyssey*?

I. The author was **Homer**. He was blind, and he was a minstrel (or bard)

A. He wrote 2 epics: **long, narrative poems**
   1. *The Iliad* is a war epic
   2. *The Odyssey* is a long journey epic

B. They were written about **800** B.C. and told about events that happened in **1200** B.C.
I wonder who wrote *The Odyssey*?

C. A minstrel is an entertainer who told stories and sang songs. Also called a bard, rhapsode, epic singer, or song stitcher. A minstrel was both a historian and an entertainer.

1. Minstrels **borrowed** material from legends, epics, and myths already known by the people.
I wonder who wrote *The Odyssey*?

2. *Minstrels* used descriptions and phrases that were familiar to the audience called *epithets*. (e.g. “wing’d words,” “rosy-fingered dawn,” “grey-eyed Athena”)

3. They made stories as *uncomplicated* as possible.
I wonder who wrote *The Odyssey*?

4. Stories were told *repetitively*
   a. There was no written history
   b. **Minstrels** traveled from place to place singing of recent events or of the stories of heroes or gods & goddesses

5. Audiences never **tired** of the stories.
I wonder who wrote *The Odyssey*?

D. Homer outshone other minstrels of his day...

1. Because of his originality of **ideas**
2. Because of his expression and the **effect** he had on his audience.

See p. 646 in textbook
All About *The Iliad*

II. *The Iliad* tells of the war between Greece and *Troy* (located in Asia Minor or the present day country of *Turkey*). *The Iliad* provides the background for *The Odyssey* and background on *Odysseus*.

A. The war lasted 10 long years.
All About *The Iliad*

B. These are the events of the Trojan War:

1. In reality, it possibly began because Greeks **tried to control trade routes**

2. According to myth: **Paris**, a prince of Troy, kidnapped **Helen**, queen of **Sparta** an wife of **Menelaus**, king of Sparta (a Greek city-state).
All About *The Iliad*

3. The Greek kings banded together and sent armies in **1,000 ships** across the Aegean Sea to attack Troy. (Helen is known as “The face that launched a thousand ships”)

4. Gods and goddesses took sides in the war.

5. For nine years there was no victory.

6. Finally, Odysseus devised a plan: the **Trojan Horse**
All About The Iliad

7. The Greeks conquered Troy; the Trojans were slaughtered and the city was destroyed.

8. The Greeks set out for home in their ships.

9. Many gods and goddesses were offended when Greeks desecrated temples and did not make offerings.
All About *The Odyssey*

**III. The Odyssey** - Epic poem of the **long journey**. Greek audiences would have known the war story of the *Iliad* and been familiar with Odysseus as a hero from that story that came up with the idea that ended the war.

**A. The Odyssey** tells of many adventures of Odysseus trying to sail **home** after the Trojan War. (Ithaca)
All About *The Odyssey*

B. It took **10** years for him to sail home.

C. The main characters:

1. **Odysseus** *(Ulysses)*: super-human hero from Ithaca.

2. **Penelope**: Odysseus’ wife

3. **Telemachus**: Odysseus’ son
All About *The Odyssey*

D. Primary gods and goddesses in the epic

1. **Athena**: goddess of wisdom
2. **Poseidon**: god of the sea
3. **Zeus**: king of the gods
What is an Epic?

IV. The **epic**
   A. The oldest literary form or **genre**
   B. A long **story-poem** involving:
      1. A great hero having **supernatural** qualities (but not “super powers”)
      2. The gods and goddesses take an active part in **helping** or **hindering** (e.g. **Poseidon** is Odysseus’ enemy and **Athena** helps Odysseus).
What is an Epic?

3. The **fate** of an entire race of people is often **at stake**.

4. **Heroes** found their greatest glory in battle.

5. It involves a struggle that **the culture of the hero values**
   a. The hero embodies the **values** of their culture.
   b. Greeks used *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* to teach Greek **culture and values**.
What is an Epic?

6. Written in **elevated** style (formal)
7. Epics begin with an **invocation** (a prayer to the **muse** of poetry)
   a. **Muses** are 9 daughters of **Zeus** who were in charge of the arts.

   **Calliope** was the **muse** of **epic poetry**.
Classical Mythology

V. **Greek** and Roman mythology

A. **Polytheists**: they believed in many gods

B. Gods had many human qualities
   1. They were **conniving**

VI. They were **quarrelsome**

A. Many of the gods lived on **Mt. Olympus**
Classical Mythology

D. Ambrosia: the food of the gods
E. Nectar: the drink of the gods
F. Gods interfered in human affairs
G. Gods were immortal: they live forever
Greek Values and Beliefs

VI. Greek values and beliefs

A. Greeks believed it was wrong for any man to have *hubris*

B. The *character* of a man was very important
   
   1. One important quality to have was *courage*
   
   2. *Loyalty* to both *home* and *family* was the most important
Greek Values and Beliefs

C. Man was not master of his own destiny or fate, he was like a “pawn in a chess game.”

D. Man could not control his own fate, but he could control how he reacted to the gods’ interfering or meddling (how someone reacted was an important character quality).
The Bronze Age

VII. Greek life during the **Bronze Age** (1200 B.C.)

A. It was an era ruled by **tribal chiefs**

B. It was a **violent** life in **hard** times

C. Greece consisted of small **city-states**

1. **Ithaca**: Odysseus’ home was an island city-state

2. **Athens** (named after **Athena**) was a larger city-state
The Epic Hero

VIII. The characteristics of an Epic Hero are:

A. He possesses supernatural abilities or qualities.
B. He is charged with a quest.
C. He is tested, often to prove the worthiness of himself and his quest.
D. He receives help by divine beings along the way.
The Epic Hero

E. He encounters numerous *mythical* beings, magical and helpful *animals*, and human helpers and companions.

F. His travels take him to a *supernatural* world, often one that normal human beings are barred from entering.
The Epic Hero

G. He reaches a **low point** where he nearly gives up his quest or appears defeated.

H. He gains **restitution**: this often takes the form of the hero regaining his rightful place.
Your Homework

1. Paste these pages into your spiral notebook.
2. Add questions to the left hand column.
3. Find and draw pictures to illustrate these notes. You must have AT LEAST 15 pictures. Label each picture or give a short description.
Some websites to check out!

A Guided Web Tour of Homer's Greece: Links:
http://www.gpc.edu/~shale/humanities/literature/world_literature/greece/links.html

HOMER'S ODYSSEY: http://www.miracosta.cc.ca.us/home/gfloren/odyssey.htm

Mythweb:
http://www.mythweb.com/odyssey/index.html

Greek Mythology Link: http://www.maicar.com/GML/