

MYTH
An ancient story of
gods and monsters

THE MONSTER IN THE CAVE

Most people avoid
the Cyclops. Odysseus
isn't most people.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY GARY HANNA

CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play. *Indicates large speaking role.

- *Stage Directors 1, 2 & 3
(SD1, SD2, SD3)
- *Odysseus, hero of the Trojan War
All Crew, to be read by a group
- *Polyphemus, a Cyclops
Sheep, to be read by a group
- *Greek Chorus Members 1, 2, 3 & 4
(C1, C2, C3, C4)
- Thales, Eos, Linus, Bendus &
Telemon, members of Odysseus's crew
- Cyclopes 1 & 2
Note: Cyclopes is the plural form of Cyclops.

Go to Scope
Online to hear
these names
pronounced
aloud.

As You Read Think about Odysseus's actions. What do they reveal about his character?

PROLOGUE

SD1: The sound of waves echoes across a dark stage.
SD2: A small light illuminates the Greek Chorus.
All Chorus: Our story begins long ago . . .
C1: . . . in a time of powerful gods,
C2: and magical monsters,
C3: of epic battles,
C4: and great heroes.
C1: In this ancient world lived a famous Greek warrior
named Odysseus.
C2: Some said he was courageous and clever.
C3: Some called him a hero.
C4: But others saw him differently.
C1: They said he was cunning.
C2: They said he was cruel.
C3: Can one person be all these things?
All Chorus: How should we judge Odysseus?


SCENE 1 THE AEGEAN SEA

SD3: The lights rise on a crimson boat in a blue sea.
SD1: Odysseus stands at the helm. Crew members row
with heavy wooden oars.
SD2: In the corner stands the Greek Chorus. The other
characters do not see them.
All Chorus: For 10 long years, Odysseus and his men
have been away fighting in the Trojan War.
C4: Away from their families.
C1: Away from their farms and flocks.
C2: But now the war is won. With victory at their backs,
they are sailing home to Ithaca at last.
All Chorus: But danger lies ahead.
Odysseus: Row!

All crew (weakly): Row.
Odysseus: Row!
All Crew (weaker still): Row.
Thales: Odysseus, for you the men will row until they
drop, but they are weak from hunger.
Eos: We have not eaten in two days.
Linus: And our water is nearly gone.
Thales: If we do not find food and water soon . . . I fear
we will be lost forever.
Odysseus: We won the war. I refuse to believe we will
now perish at sea.
Eos: Poseidon has a sick sense of humor.
Thales: Perhaps we angered Poseidon, and that is why
we suffer.
SD3: Odysseus scans the horizon. Suddenly he points.
Odysseus: There! I see an island!
SD1: The men begin to row with more energy.
Linus: Look! Wild grapes!
Bendus: And goats!
Telemon: And fig trees!
Odysseus: Tonight, we will feast like gods.

SCENE 2 THE ISLAND OF THE CYCLOPES

SD2: Odysseus and his crew drop
anchor and row ashore in
small boats.
SD3: Odysseus points.
Odysseus: Look—smoke is
rising from that hill.
Thales: I know where we
are. This must be the
island of the Cyclopes. →



Is That a Cyclops Skull?
Some scholars think the
ancient Greeks mistook the
skulls of prehistoric elephants
for the skulls of Cyclopes.
The Greeks may have thought
the hole where the elephant's
trunk attaches to the skull
was an eye socket.

Linus: The Cyclopes are fearsome giants—lawless and aggressive.

Bendus: They are said to think themselves stronger than the gods.

Odysseus: Stronger than Zeus? I think not.

SD1: Odysseus looks toward the smoke.

Odysseus: Perhaps the Cyclopes are more like us than we think. Might they not be friendly to strangers, as Zeus commands? I would like to see for myself.

Eos: This sounds like folly.

Odysseus: When will we have another chance to find out? Let the bravest among you join me in exploring their land. The rest of you can go back to the ship.

SCENE 3

A CAVE, THE NEXT MORNING

SD2: Odysseus and 12 of his crew stand at the entrance to a large cave.

SD3: Odysseus hollers into the darkness.

Odysseus: Helloooooo!

SD1: There is no answer.

Linus: We should return to the ship.

Odysseus: Not before meeting a Cyclops.

SD2: Odysseus leads the group into the cave, where they find candles burning and piles of food.

Bendus: Look at all the cheese!

Telemon: And milk!

Thales: And meat!

Linus: Let's take some food and get out of here.

Odysseus: There is no need to rush away. The Cyclops who lives here should give us these things as gifts. Go on, have something to eat!

SD3: The men are scarfing down the food when suddenly, the ground begins to shake.

Bendus: What is happening?

Telemon: Zeus, have mercy on us!

SD1: The men shrink back into the shadows.

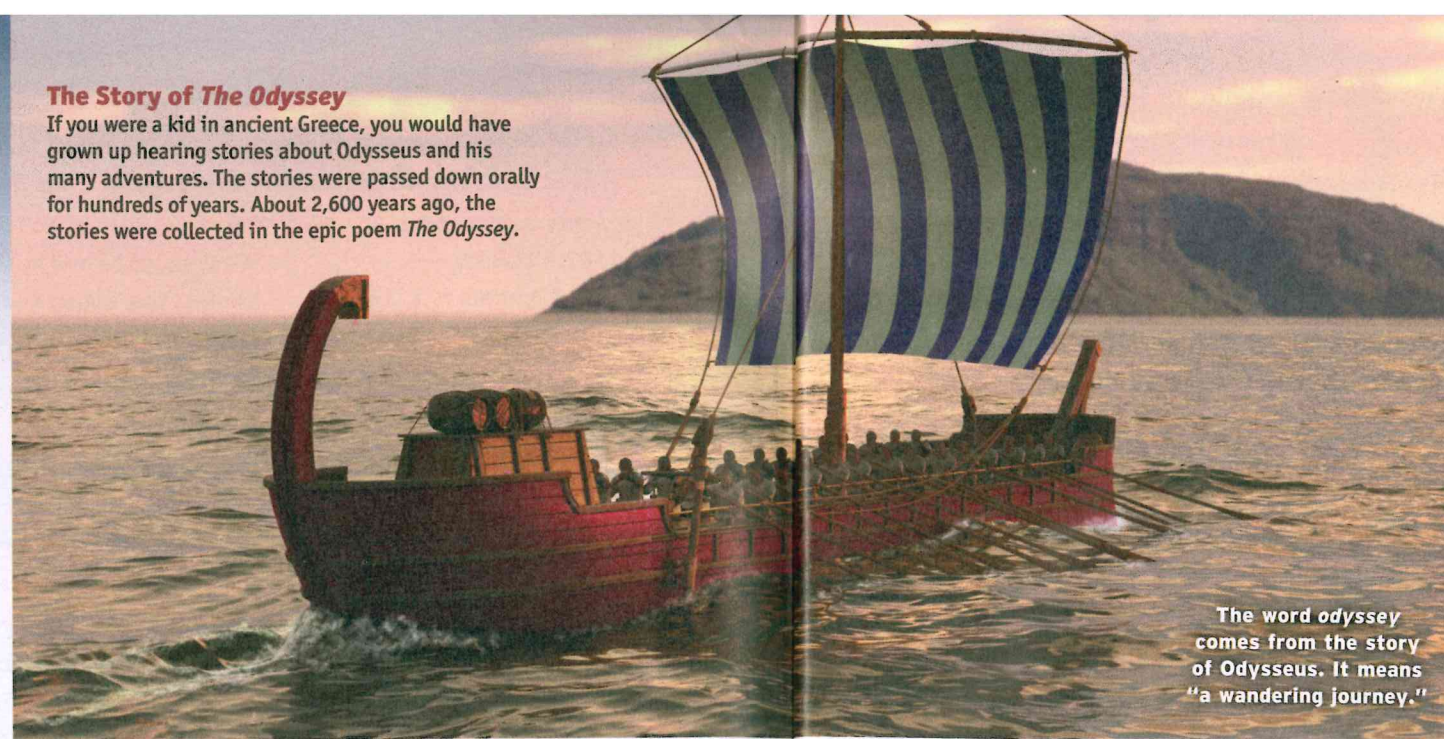
SD2: Polyphemus enters with his flock of sheep. He is taller than four men. His face is pocked with boils.

SD3: And he has just one eye—one colossal eye—in the center of his forehead.

Polyphemus (to the sheep): In you go. In you go.

The Story of The Odyssey

If you were a kid in ancient Greece, you would have grown up hearing stories about Odysseus and his many adventures. The stories were passed down orally for hundreds of years. About 2,600 years ago, the stories were collected in the epic poem *The Odyssey*.



Sheep: Baaa! Baaa!

C3: With the sheep, this giant is gentle.

C4: But the sheep have not stolen his food.

SD1: Polyphemus lifts an enormous stone and sets it in front of the cave opening.

Telemon (whispering): It would take 100 men to move that boulder.

Thales (getting frantic): How will we get out?

Odysseus: Shhhhhhh!

SD2: Polyphemus blinks his eye with surprise.

Polyphemus: Tiny strangers! Who are you?

Odysseus: We are weary travelers. We hope that you will welcome us as your guests.

Polyphemus: I see you have helped yourself to my food.

Odysseus: Zeus protects all visitors, good sir. Treat us unkindly, and you will be the object of his wrath.

SD3: The Cyclops stomps his enormous foot. Rocks tumble down the crumbling walls.

C1: He leans in and stares at Odysseus with his one . . .

C2: . . . enormous . . .

C3: . . . eye.

Polyphemus: Fool! If I spare your life, it is not because I fear the wrath of Zeus. It is because I choose to do so.

SD1: He throws a log on the fire. It crackles and hisses.



In ancient Greece, you were expected to show *xenia*, or hospitality, to your guests—or risk angering the god Zeus.

Polyphemus: Tell me, where is your ship?

Odysseus: It . . . was destroyed by Poseidon. We barely escaped the jaws of death.

Polyphemus: You do know that Poseidon is the father of all Cyclopes? He must have sent you here so I could pick my teeth with your bones.

SD2: He seizes two men and tosses them into his mouth.

Odysseus: Noooooooooooo!

SD3: Polyphemus lifts a vat of milk and guzzles it down.

SD1: Then he lies down and goes to sleep.

Linus: We must **vanquish** this Cyclops before he wakes.

Odysseus: He's the only one who can move that stone. If we kill him, we'll be trapped.

SCENE 4

THE CAVE, THE NEXT MORNING

SD2: The men, huddled in a corner, sleep restlessly.

Polyphemus: Wake up, tiny strangers. It's time for breakfast!

SD3: As the crew open their eyes, Polyphemus snatches two more men and gobbles them up.

Odysseus: You monster!

SD1: Polyphemus shoves aside the boulder.

Polyphemus: Shoo, sheep. Time to go to pasture.

Sheep: Baaa! Baaa!

SD2: The sheep leave. Polyphemus replaces the boulder.

Bendus: Now what?

Telemon: We're doomed.

SD3: Odysseus looks around. He sees a giant log.

Odysseus: Maybe not. I have a plan.

SCENE 5

THE CAVE, THAT NIGHT

SD1: The men carve the tip of the giant log into a sharp point.

SD2: The ground shakes as Polyphemus approaches.

Odysseus: Hide the log. Quickly!

SD3: They roll the log into the shadows just as Polyphemus moves the rock and enters with his sheep.

Polyphemus: In you go. In you go. Shoo, sheep, shoo.

Sheep: Baaa! Baaa!

SD1: Polyphemus seals the cave.

Odysseus: You have eaten four of my men. And to think I brought you a drink offering.

Polyphemus: A drink offering?

Odysseus: Yes, the nectar of the gods.

SD2: Odysseus pulls a jug filled with wine from his satchel. He pours it into a bowl.

Odysseus: Here, I give this to you so that you might have mercy and let us go.

SD3: Polyphemus takes the bowl and drinks.

Polyphemus: Mmmmm. I like you, small one. Tell me your name, and I will give you a gift. But first, give me more of this drink!

All Chorus: Three times Odysseus fills the bowl. Three times the Cyclops drinks.

Odysseus: You asked my name, and I shall tell you. My name is Nobody. Now what is the gift you promised?

Polyphemus: Here is your gift, Nobody: I will eat you last. Ha! ha! ha!

SD1: Polyphemus falls over and begins to snore.

Odysseus (whispering): Get the log. Hurry!

SD2: The men **hoist** the log onto their shoulders.

Odysseus: On my count: One . . . two . . . three!

SD3: The men ram the pointed end of the log into Polyphemus's eye.

Polyphemus: Aaah! What have you done?! I cannot see!

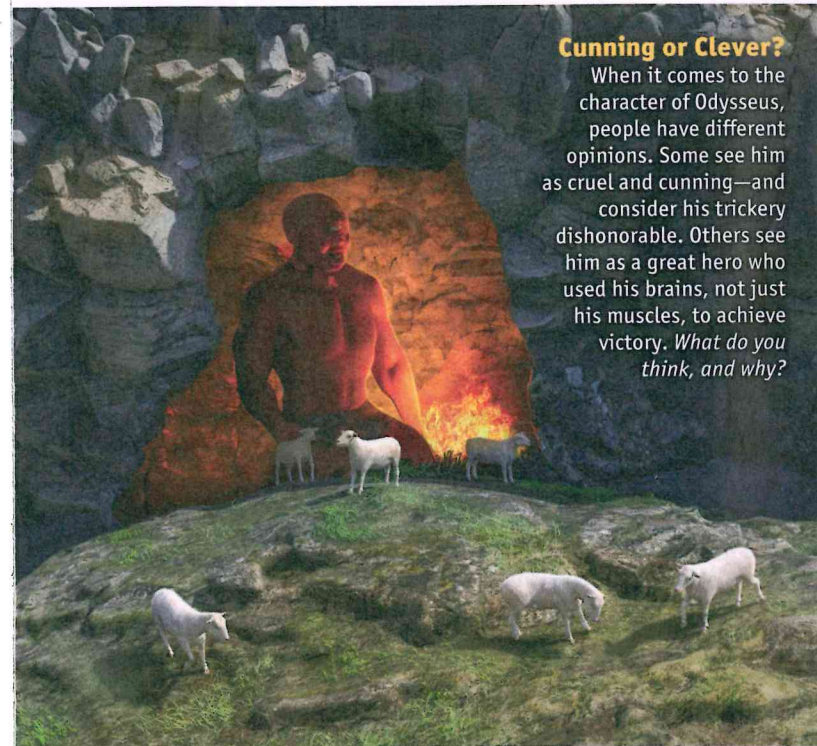
SD1: Hearing his yells, a few Cyclopes gather outside the cave.

Cyclops 1: What's wrong, Polyphemus?

Cyclops 2: Is someone trying to do you harm?
Polyphemus: Nobody is trying to kill me!
Cyclops 2: Well, if nobody is bothering you, be quiet so we can get some sleep!
SD2: The Cyclopes leave.

SCENE 6
 THE CAVE, THE NEXT MORNING

SD3: Polyphemus feels around the cave until he finds the entrance.
SD1: He moves the boulder aside and sits in the opening with his gigantic arms spread wide.
Polyphemus: You may have blinded me, tiny strangers, but you'll never get past me.
Telemon (whispering): How will we get past?
Odysseus: I have an idea. Each of you must climb under one of the sheep and cling to its belly.
SD2: The men do as Odysseus has directed.
Polyphemus: Okay, sheep, time to go to pasture.



Cunning or Clever?
 When it comes to the character of Odysseus, people have different opinions. Some see him as cruel and cunning—and consider his trickery dishonorable. Others see him as a great hero who used his brains, not just his muscles, to achieve victory. What do you think, and why?

SD3: The sheep trot toward the entrance of the cave.
Polyphemus: Let me check you to make sure no humans are escaping.
SD1: He pats each sheep on the back as it passes.
SD2: Odysseus is last, clinging to the largest ram.
Polyphemus: My best ram, why are you last to leave my cave today? Is it because you know your master has lost his eye? I will have revenge on Nobody yet.

SCENE 7
 THE SHORE

All Chorus: The men take the sheep to their ship.
Eos: Odysseus, you're alive! But—where are the others?
Odysseus: A horrible monster ate them. Now quick, get these sheep on board.
Thales: To the oars!
C4: Once the ship is away from the shore, Odysseus calls to Polyphemus.
Odysseus: Cyclops! Oh, Cyclops!

SD3: Polyphemus rushes to the edge of the sea.
Odysseus: I warned that Zeus would punish you for your treachery!
SD1: The Cyclops hurls a boulder. It lands in the water, creating a wave that sends the ship back toward shore.
Odysseus: Row for your lives, men! Row for your lives! (to Polyphemus) You brute!
Eos: Odysseus, do not provoke him.
Odysseus: Cyclops, if anyone asks who defeated you, you can tell them it was the valiant warrior of Ithaca, the hero of the Trojan War: Odysseus!
Polyphemus: Aaaaaaargh! Avenge me, great Poseidon! See that Odysseus never reaches his home alive!
C1: Odysseus sails off into the sun, rejoicing in his victory.
C2: But Poseidon is furious.
C3: Many troubles are on the horizon.
All Chorus: But that is a story for another day. ●

Writing Contest

Read the play and watch the video at Scope Online. Now imagine that you're Zeus, ruler of all the gods. In an essay or a video, tell Odysseus and Polyphemus what you think of their behavior. Send your work to **Cyclops Contest**. Three winners will get *The Trials of Apollo: The Tower of Nero* by Rick Riordan.

Entries must be submitted by a legal resident of the U.S. age 18 and older, who is the teacher, parent, or guardian of the student. See page 2 for details.

Get this activity online.

