**Ancient Greece**

**Homer's Odyssey**

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The *Odyssey* is an epic poem written by the Greek poet Homer. It tells of the many adventures of the hero Odysseus. Homer wrote the poem in the 8th century BC.

**Plot Summary**

The *Odyssey* begins with Odysseus telling the story of his adventures. He has been trying to get home for ten years.

**Heading Home**

Odysseus began his journey after the end of the Trojan War. He and his men had been fighting for 10 years. With the end of the war they could finally head home. They set out for their home of Ithaca. However, Zeus was angry with the Greeks and a huge storm pushed Odysseus and his men off course. They had many adventures while trying to find their way home.

**Adventures**

Here are a few of the adventures encountered by Odysseus and his men.

**Lotus-Eaters**

The first adventure Odysseus had was on the island of the Lotus-eaters. These people ate only plants. They gave some of his men a plant that made them forget about home and want to stay with the Lotus-eaters. Odysseus had to drag his men to the ships and chain them so they would continue on the journey.

**Cyclopes**

Odysseus and his men next landed on an island inhabited by one-eyed giants called Cyclopes. They were captured in a cave by one of the Cyclops named Polyphemus. In order to get away they clung to the bottom of his sheep as they went out to graze.

**Aeolus**

At one point Odysseus arrived at the island of Aeolus, the god of winds. Aeolus agreed to help Odysseus get home. He gave him a bag containing the energies of the winds, then he sent a strong wind to carry their ships to Ithaca. The men were nearly home, in fact they could see the island of Ithaca, when one of them decided to open the sack to see what was in it. He let the winds out of the bag and they blew them all the way back to Aeolus.

**Scylla and Charybdis**

While continuing to sail home, the crew had to pass through a dangerous straight. There they encountered a monster named Scylla. Scylla had six heads and 12 tentacles. With her six heads she grabbed six of Odysseus' men. This allowed the ship to get away.

However, the ship soon encountered the terrifying whirlpool named Charybdis. They narrowly escaped being pulled into the depths of the sea.

**Calypso**

Eventually all of Odysseus' men died during the adventures and his ships were destroyed. Only Odysseus was left and he floated in the ocean clinging to a piece of wood for nine days. Finally, he landed on an island ruled by the nymph Calypso.

Calypso fell in love with Odysseus. She wanted him to stay with her forever. She kept him captive for seven years. The goddess Athena began to feel sorry for Odysseus. She asked Zeus to make Calypso set Odysseus free.

**Finally Home**

After twenty years, Odysseus finally returned home. He disguised himself at first. There were many men at his house trying to convince his wife Penelope to marry them. They were sure that Odysseus was dead. Odysseus wife had set up a contest. Any man that could shoot an arrow through 12 axe heads would win her hand in marriage.

Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, was the only one to make the shot. He then killed all of the men and revealed himself to his wife.

**Interesting Facts about the Odyssey**

* The saying "between Scylla and Charybdis" is often used to mean that you are stuck between two dangers.
* It was Odysseus who came up with the idea for the Trojan horse that helped the Greeks defeat the Trojans in the Trojan War.
* Odysseus' dog Argos recognized him even though he was in disguise and it had been 20 years.
* Odysseus is called Ulysses by the Romans.
* Many of the stories in the *Odyssey* were passed down for hundreds of years orally before Homer wrote them down.

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