

THE ODYSSEY:
INTRODUCTION &
BACKGROUND INFO

THE GODS & RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

- The Greeks believed completely in the existence of gods and goddesses; *polytheism*
 - Believed that gods took an active interest in human life
 - Gods behaved in human ways (possessed human characteristics)
 - Respect for the gods was essential for success and survival
- Greek culture also known for hero-worship
 - Hero might be the town's founder or a historical figure who played a major role in an important battle



 The picture can't be displayed.

THE GODS & RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

- Greeks also believed in monsters and mythical creatures



The cyclops



Siren



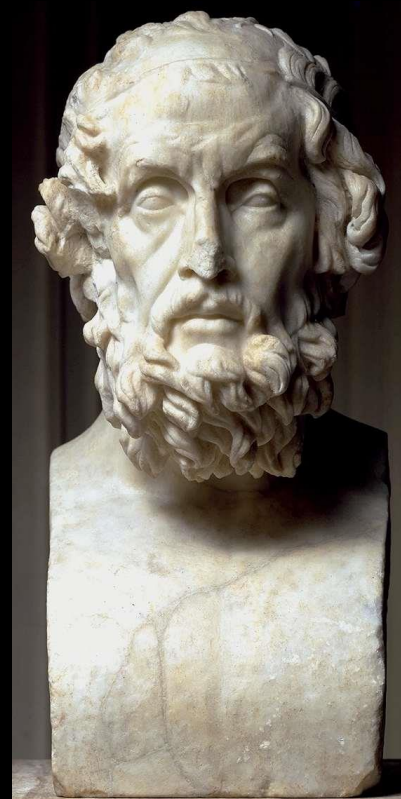
Charybdis



Scylla

BACKGROUND INFO

- An *epic* is a long, narrative poem about a national or legendary hero.
 - Ancient Greece produced two epics
 - *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (900-700 B.C.)
- Both written by Homer
 - Blind
 - No official information has been found regarding his birthdate or birthplace.



BACKGROUND INFO

- **Trojan War (1200 B.C.)**
- **Legend:** war began after Paris (prince of Troy) kidnapped Helen (most beautiful woman in the world) from her husband, Menelaus (king of Sparta)
- **Menelaus built an army to get back his wife and restore his pride**
- **Odysseus was a soldier in this army**



Paris & Helen (from the movie *Troy*)

BACKGROUND INFO

- **Odysseus = King of Ithaca**
- **The Greeks battled the Trojans for 10 years, but had little success**
- **Odysseus thought of a plan to trick the Trojans into thinking that the Greeks forfeited**

- **The Trojan Horse**
- **Gave the Greeks access into the city**
- **It worked!**
- **The Greeks defeated the Trojans**

***** written between 750-650 BC, but it's setting is around 12th century BC*****



Aegean World at the time of the Trojan War



THE TROJAN HORSE

ANCIENT GREEK VALUES

- **Intelligence**
- **Glory: equivalent to FAME**
 - War stories
 - Souls that achieved glory during life were given privileges in Hades
- **Hospitality: Helping others**
 - Offered food, shelter, protection to travelers without question
 - Hospitable even when they didn't want to be
 - Brotherly duty or fear of the gods?
- **Loyalty: family, community, & gods**
- **Bravery**



THE ODYSSEY

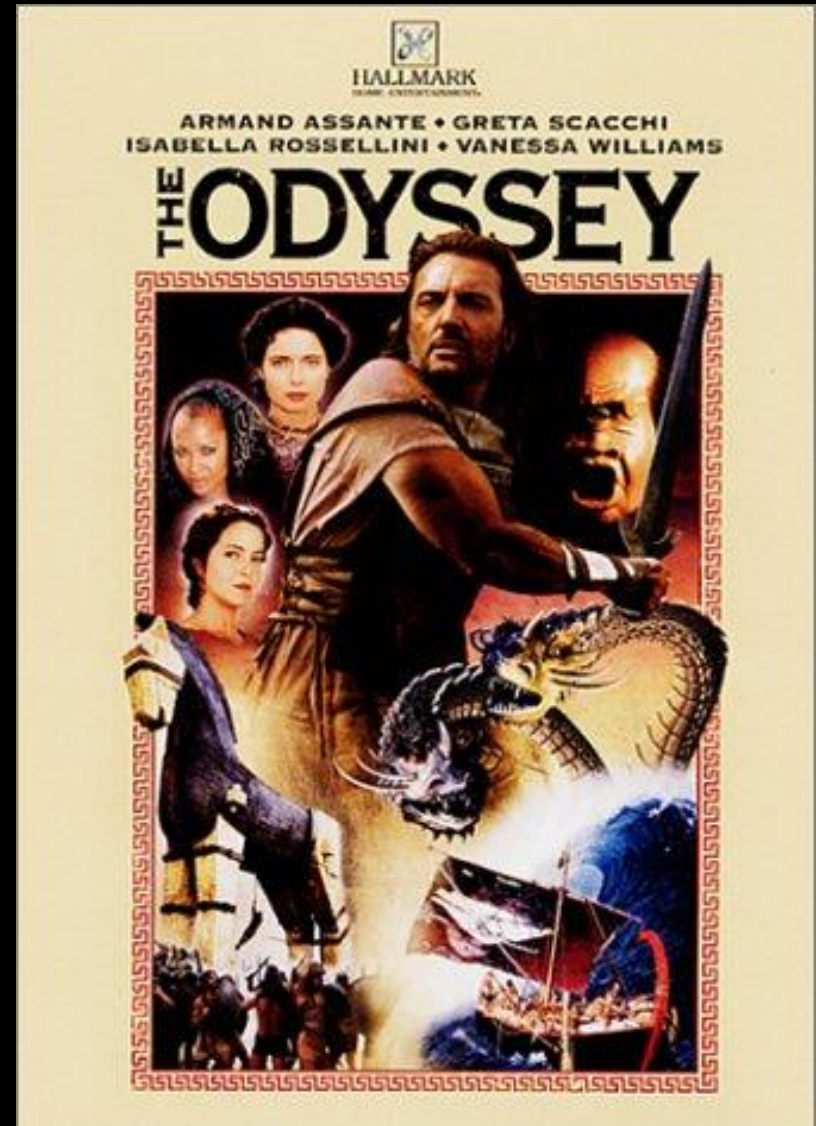
- In *The Odyssey*, Homer starts by telling about the last days of the Trojan War
- The man responsible for the fall of Troy is Odysseus
 - Trojan Horse story
- Because Odysseus was instrumental in Troy's destruction, *he angered the gods who were sympathetic to Troy*
 - The gods vow that he will have a long and difficult journey home.



This journey takes 10 years and is the subject of *The Odyssey*.

THE ODYSSEY

- Odysseus and his men encounter many dangers which make their return to Ithaca difficult:
 - Monsters
 - Women who try to keep him from his wife
- Somehow, Odysseus always finds a way to get out of difficult situations
 - Intelligence/cleverness
 - Quick thinking
 - Bravery



The Odyssey:
Literary Terms

What does it mean if something is “epic”?



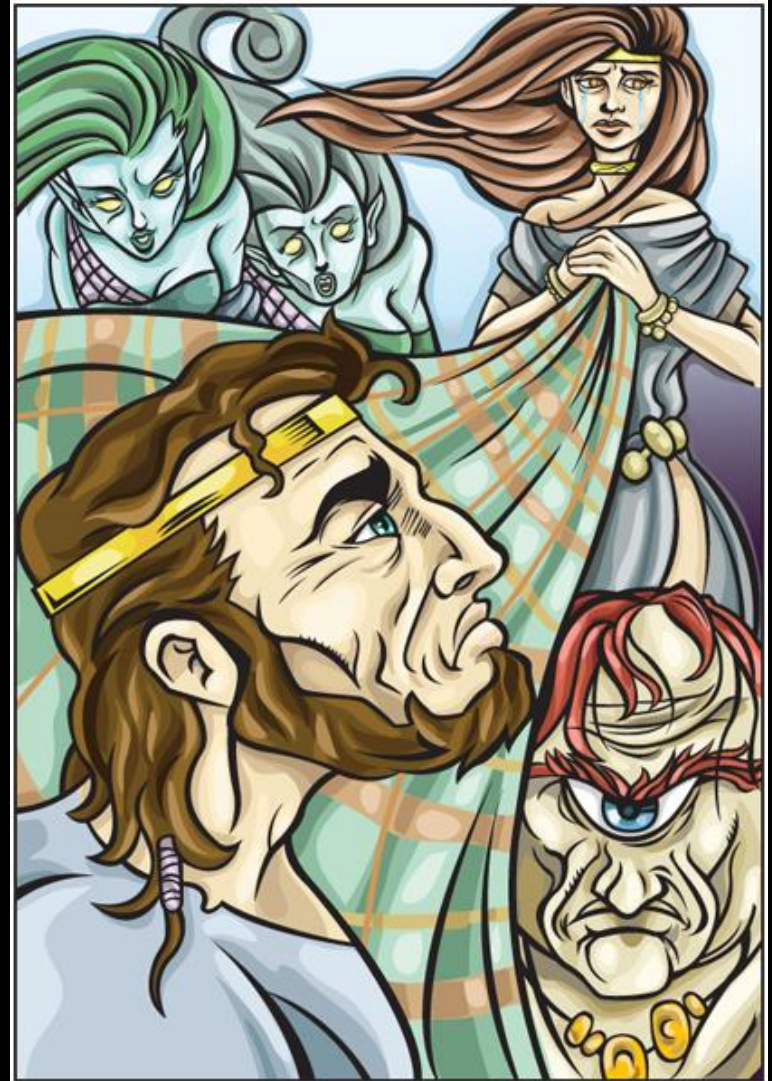
NOT JUST FAIL.

EPIC FAIL!!!!!!



Epic Poetry

- **Definition:** a lengthy narrative poem that usually contains the heroic deeds and events significant to a particular culture or society.
- **Example:** *The Odyssey*
- 10 characteristics of epic poetry



Epic Poetry

Characteristics:

- Begins “in medias res” (in the middle of things)
- Has a vast setting
- Features lengthy, formal speeches
- Contains divine interventions—THE GODS!
- Features heroes that embody the values and morals of the civilization
- The protagonist descends into the underworld/hell

Epic Hero

- **Definition:** the protagonist of an epic poem
- Brave and noble character
- Admired for great achievements
- Affected by great events
- **Example:** Odysseus, Hercules



Epic Hero

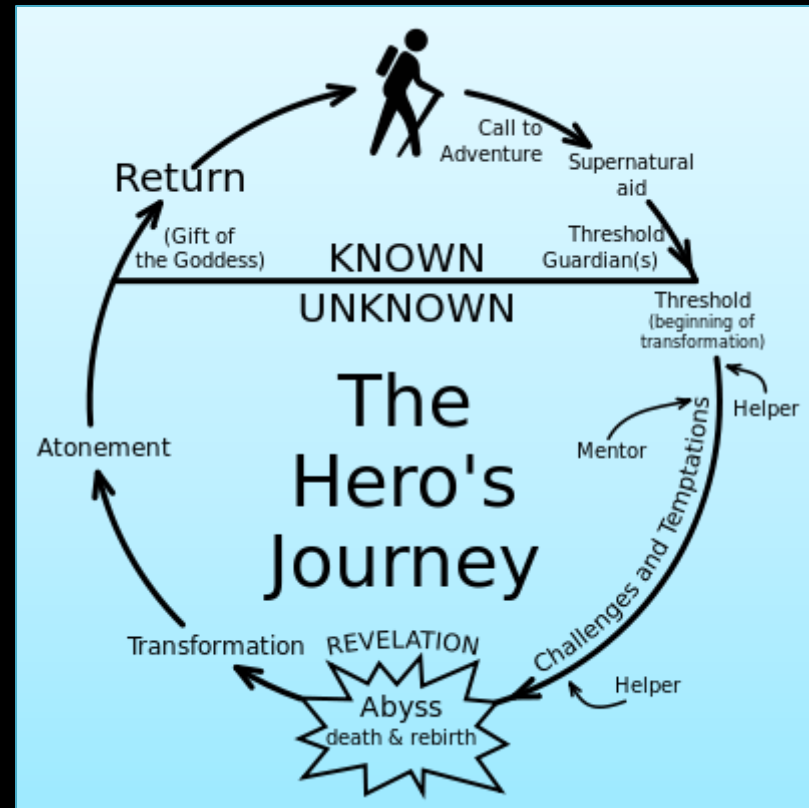
Epic Hero Characteristics:

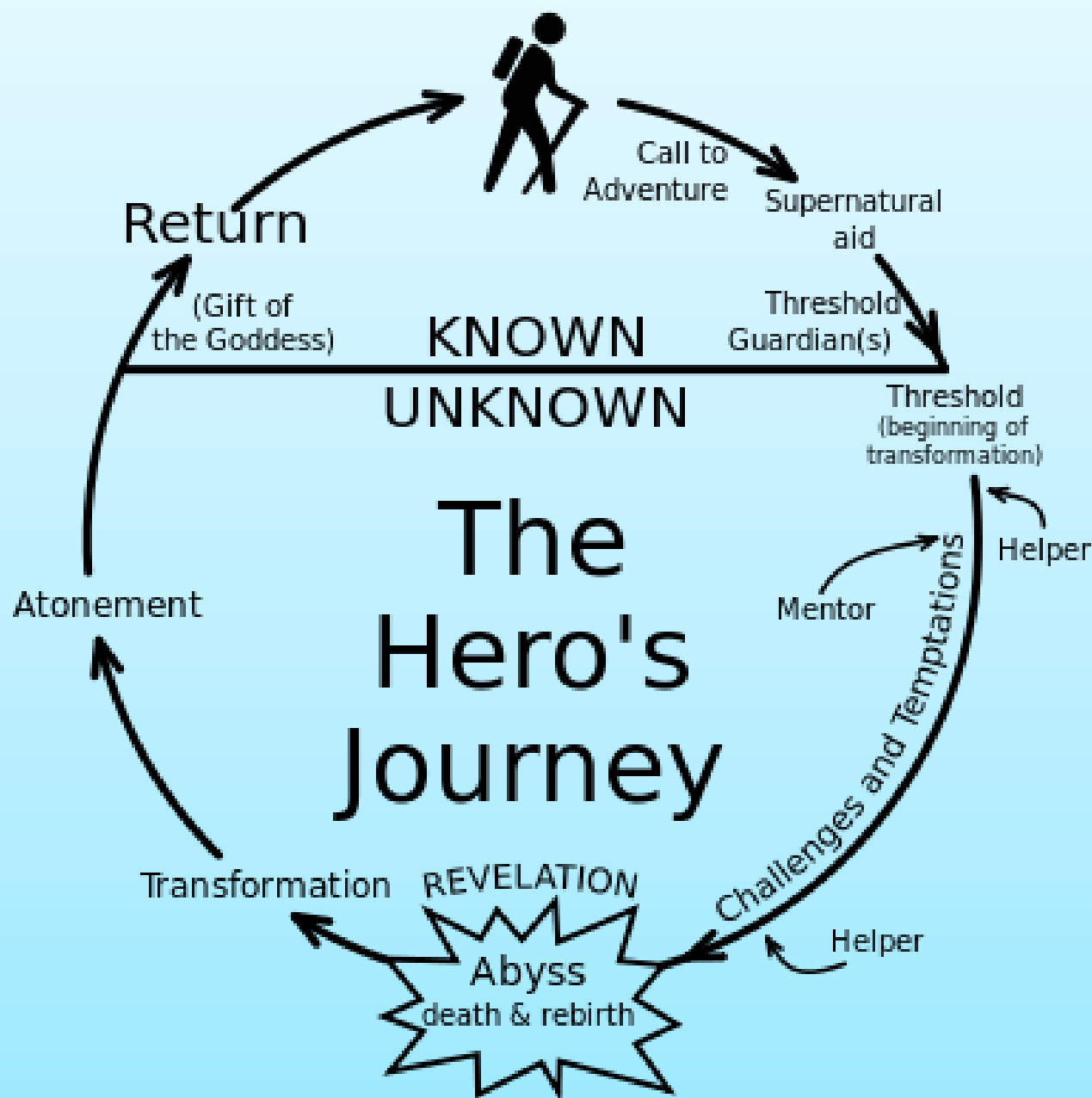
- Super-human qualities
(stronger/braver than others)
- Still human, so has a
flaw/weakness
- Must conquer many difficult tasks
- On a quest for something of great
value (to him or his people)
- Villain(s) try to keep the hero
from his quest
- Knows that the Gods come first,
then heroes, then humans
- Physically beautiful



Steps in the Epic Hero's Journey

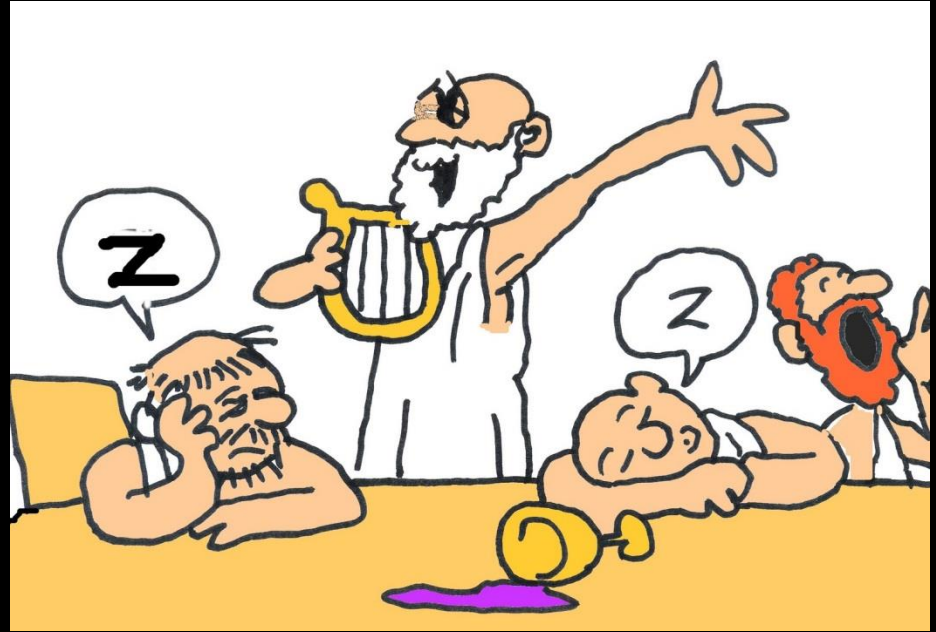
1. Call to adventure and/or quest for identity or duty
2. Leaves home for a long period of time
3. Journey consists of difficult tasks
4. Hero must depend on his wit
5. Journey leads to a transformation or self-realization
6. Hero regains his rightful place in society





Epic Simile

- **Definition:** an extended simile that is elaborated in great detail and usually runs over several lines
- Still uses “like” or “as”
- Often contains thoughts that do not relate directly to the plot
- Used for **emphasis**



Epic Simile

Hermes flight:

“A gull patrolling between the wave crests of the desolate sea will dip to catch a fish and douse his wings; no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew until the distant island lay ahead, then rising shoreward from the violet ocean he stepped up to the cave” (Homer 652).

What is Hermes' flight being compared to here?

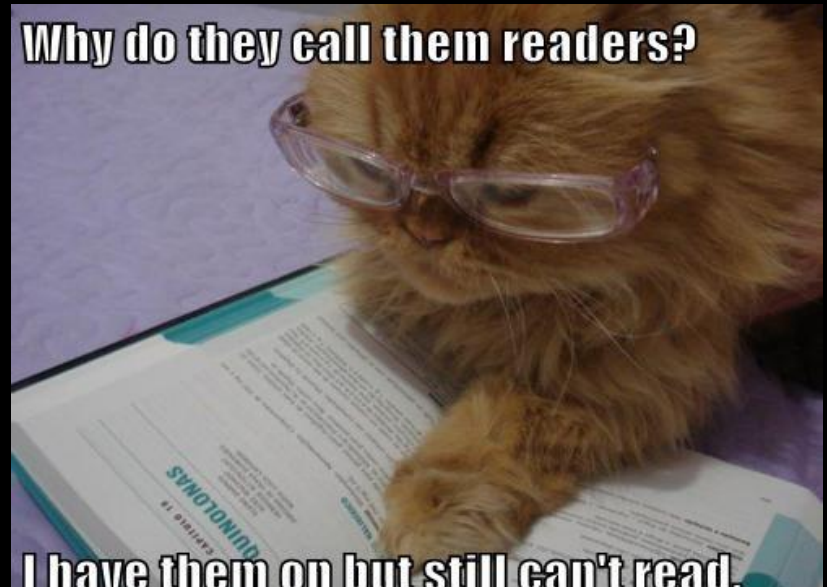


Oral Tradition

- **Definition:** stories that were told and retold verbally from one generation to another
- Many ancient Greeks were not **literate** unless their profession required them to be
 - Women didn't have jobs, so most were illiterate
 - Men who partook in business professions (trading, selling goods) were literate



Why do they call them readers?



I have them on but still can't read.

Tragic Flaw

- **Definition:** the character defect that leads to the downfall of the protagonist in an epic or tragedy

Example:

- **Odysseus' PRIDE:** Odysseus and his men escape from the Cyclops, but as his ship is sailing away, Odysseus yells out that his name is Odysseus, son of Laertes. He has a great deal of pride, and it often causes him to make rash decisions.



FULL SPEED AHEAD

What's The Worst That Could Happen?