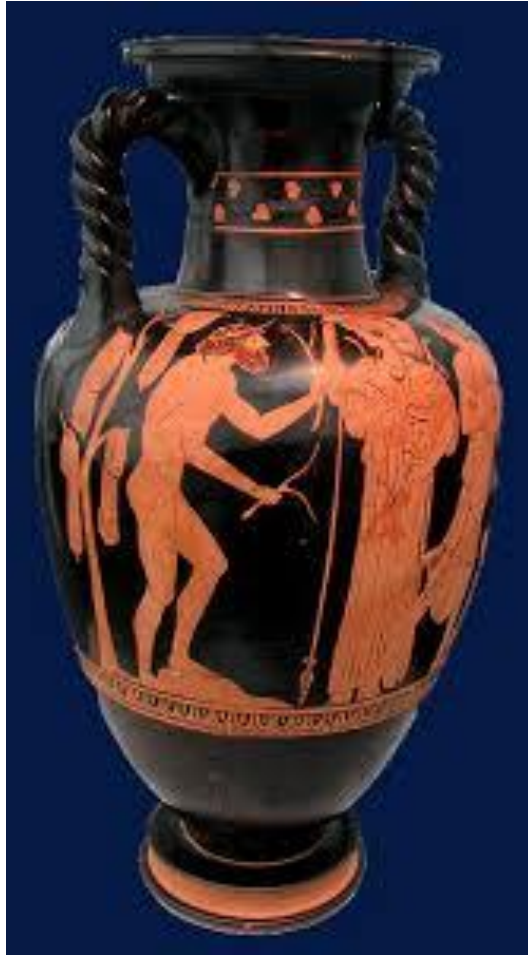


HOMER'S ODYSSEY



2nd Gymnasium of Kavala

2017-2019

1. The background story

Many years ago, at the age between myth and history, the Greeks went to war to conquer Troy, an important city at the other side of the Aegean Sea. They wanted to take back beautiful Helen, the queen who was violently carried off by Paris, prince of Troy, from her husband, king Menelaus.

The war had been going on for ten whole years, but there was no winner. So Odysseus, the smartest of the Greek generals, came up with a brilliant plan. The Greeks pretended they went back home, leaving a present. It was a big wooden horse, the 'Trojan Horse'. The Trojans full of excitement carried it inside their city. The same night, while everyone was sleeping, armed soldiers came out of the horse's belly and set the city on fire. Troy was burnt down. Fire, killing and desperation everywhere. They didn't only burn houses, but temples and statues of Gods, as well.

The Greeks won the Trojans but the Gods were angry with them. A lot of Greeks were drowned on the way back, crossing the Aegean Sea. Odysseus and his soldiers had been tossing at the sea for many years. The hero managed to return to Ithaca after many adventures. He was alone, with a boat that wasn't his, without his men. Homer, in his poem 'Odyssey', tells the adventures of our hero, Odysseus, on his way back home.

2. Cyclops

A lot of days have passed since the day they left Troy when Odysseus with his men arrive in the land of the Cyclops...Gigantic, with one eye, awful in appearance the Cyclops live alone, each one in his cave without organisation and order. In this land there was no king and laws, nor parliament and courts. The Cyclops were shepherds and didn't know how to cultivate the land, nor to travel in the sea. No man ever went on that island because they knew there was no going back. So, the Cyclops waited for a sailor to shipwreck in the island, to eat him.

There, in the land of Cyclops, in the dark night, Odysseus and his men anchor and they find what they need for the rest of their journey. However, this isn't enough for Odysseus. He wants to meet the Cyclops despite his men's objections. So next morning he takes twelve of his men and a skin bag of wine, which will save him in the hardest time. They arrive in a big empty cave. There Cyclops "Polyphemus" lives. He has only one eye and he is Poseidon's son. He is a huge monster. He is cruel and inhospitable. He even disregards Gods.

Odysseus and his men enter the cave to get supplies. They don't see anyone but they find some cheese, meat and milk. His men want to leave as soon as possible but Odysseus wants to meet a Cyclops.

At night, Polyphemus returns in his cave. Odysseus and his men are terrified. After he has put all the sheep into the cave, the one-eyed giant closes the entrance of the cave with a big rock. Nobody could go out or get in the cave. After he milks the sheep and empties the milk into big pots, he sees the Greeks. Odysseus tells him that they have shipwrecked because he wants to protect his ship and his men and asks for hospitality.

The Cyclops immediately shows his real intentions. He stands up, gets closer to them, grabs two men and eats them. Next morning, he eats two more men. Before leaving with his sheep, he uses the big rock to trap

Odysseus and his men into the cave. There is no hope to get out of the cave and they know that when the Cyclops comes back at night, it might be their turn.

The same night the Cyclops eats two more men. Things are very difficult. But the human mind can win the power of the Cyclops.

After the Cyclops has eaten the two men, Odysseus offers him wine. When the Cyclops tastes it, he says to Odysseus:

“Bring me more wine, little man. We have wine too but this is “nectar”. Bring me to drink and tell me your name. I have a gift for your treat.”

Odysseus gives him three times to drink and then says:

“Cyclops, you have asked my name. Well my name is Nobody. That's how everybody calls me.”

“ I will eat Nobody, too. But he will be the last. And this is my gift to you.” the Cyclops answers meanly.

He said that and fell asleep. Immediately Odysseus and his men take the chance and stab his eye with a sharp tree trunk. His eye is burning and starting bleeding. Polyphemus is growling from the pain like a wounded animal. He takes the tree trunk out of his eye and asks for help from the other Cyclops. When Polyphemus says that “Nobody” has fooled him, the other Cyclops think that he has gone crazy and say to him: "If nobody has blinded you, why did you wake us up in the middle of the night?".

Polyphemus moaning is furiously looking up for Odysseus into the cave but he always gets away. Then Polyphemus goes to sleep exhausted. Odysseus and his men use the fur from the rams which Polyphemus has as a mattress. They are all tied under the bellies of the rams. Next morning the rams go out of the cave one after the other. Polyphemus touches their backs but he isn't able to understand that Odysseus and his

men are hiding on their bellies. As soon as they come out they run towards their ship and sail to the open sea.

Then Odysseus makes a huge mistake. Being happy he shouts to Polyphemus:

“Polyphemus you and your father Poseidon should know that a common human blinded you. Not a god, but a common man, canning Odysseus did.”

He offends Poseidon, god of the sea and father of Polyphemus, who gets very angry. Our hero will pay for this huge mistake. Zeus won't accept their sacrifice for their escape. The father of gods knows that Odysseus will return back to Ithaca, but through adventures, alone, without his men, after ten whole years.

3. Aeolus, Circe, Hades, Calypso, Land of Phaeakes

From the land of Cyclops, Odysseus and his men arrive in the island of Aeolus, god of the winds. When it is time to leave, Aeolus kills a nine-year-old ox and with his skin makes a bag. In this bag he closes all the winds and ties it with a silver thread. His men open the bag because they believe that it has treasures and suddenly, strong winds come out and cause a wild storm.

Infinite sea is around and in front of them. Their souls are sorrowful, their bodies numbed. At some point they reach Aea, the island of Circe, a demonic goddess. When she realizes their presence, she invites them inside the palace to offer them a cooling drink. They drink it without suspecting anything, and then they turn into pigs. Real pigs, with pig body, fur, spiral tail and voice. Odysseus manages to save them.

Following the ocean's stream they arrive at the portals of Hades. In accordance with Circe's instructions, they dig a hole and make funeral libations and sacrifice animals. Myriads dead people appear driven by the blood, but Odysseus wants to meet Tiresias who tells the future.

“God Poseidon will cause difficulties on your way back since he hasn't forgotten that you have blinded his son. After arriving with your men at the island of Thrinakia you will see the oxen of the god Sun browsing .If you harm them, your death is sure. But if you don't harm them, you will arrive in Ithaca after many sufferings. Even if you get back to your home country alone without your men and by a foreign ship you will find other sufferings at your house. You will find men who want to marry your wife, Penelope. You will have to kill them all in order to take back your throne, your home and your wife. After killing all the suitors, you will have to go to people who don't know what sea is, who

eat food without salt and who have neither boats nor oars. And there when a passer-by sees you and doesn't know what the oar, you carry, is you have to kill a ram, a bull and a boar for Poseidon. That's how you can go back to your home and die at a very old age proud of your people."Tiresias said.

And that's how it happened.Odysseus lost all his men, then he arrived at the island of Calypso where he stayed for seven years. Athena, goddess of wisdom and guardian of Odysseus, finally convinced the other gods to order Calypso to set Odysseus free. So Calypso gives him the appropriate tools to build a raft. Five days later Odysseus sails in his raft and sails for seventeen days. Unfortunately, Poseidon sees him and causes a terrible storm that destroys his raft.

After fighting for two overnights with the waves Odysseus ends up in the land of Phaeakes. He is naked and finds shelter in the leafage of two bushes by the river. The next day girls voices wake him up. It is king Alcinous daughter who with her friends were washing clothes in the river and are now playing with a ball. Odysseus covers himself with a branch from a tree and appears. The girls scatter frightened. Only Nausica stays fearless. She listens to his story and decides to help him. Following her instructions, Odysseus arrives at the palace and is hosted by king Alcinous. The king listens to his adventures and orders his men to take him back to Ithaka. There they leave him asleep on the coast of his homeland.

4. Back to Ithaka

Odysseus wakes up and as soon as he recognises the place where he is, he fills with joy. He kisses the soil and wishes to the Nymphs who live in the place.

And here comes Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who always helps him.

“Our first concern, she says, is to insure the gifts and then I will tell you what your sufferings will be. You will not go straight to the palace. The suitors are waiting there to kill you. First, you will go to the hut of your loyal herd Evmaeus. There, you will meet Telemachus, your son. Together you will plan the killing of the suitors and he will lead you disguised as a poor beggar, to the palace. You will not talk to anyone, and you will endure all the insults.”

So, it happened. Odysseus meets Telemachus in the hut of Evmaeus. Once Telemachus recognised his father he falls into his arms. They cannot stop kissing each other. They cry and laugh. They shout as loud as they can. "Father!" "My son!"

Next morning, Evmaeus and Odysseus start for the palace. As they approach the palace, Argos, Odysseus' beloved dog, understands that his master, who has been missing for so many years, is approaching. He raises his head, wags his tail and quietly dies at Odysseus' feet. Odysseus is moved to see him but he cannot pet him, not to get betrayed.

Afterwards, Odysseus enters the palace, twenty years after he left. As a beggar he accepts Telemachus' mercy and in order not to be betrayed he starts to beg from all the suitors. Everyone gives him something except from Antinous. He offends the stranger and throws him a stool that strikes him on the shoulder. Odysseus stays still. He only moves his head and thinks of revenge. Telemachus is angry, but shows nothing. So is Penelope who needs the stranger to ask information for her

husband. But Odysseus asks her to meet after the suitors leave. And that's how the first night at the Odysseus' palace ends.

The next day, Penelope, urged by Athena, goes down to the symposium hall. She can't deceive the suitors anymore. She has decided to get married again. So she brings Odysseus' bow and announces a game among the suitors.

"The one who will stretch the bow and manage to pass the arrow through the twelve axes will be my new husband", she says.

For a moment, Telemachus is surprised, but he quickly complies with his mother's instructions. He sets the axes and he starts first to prove that he is capable to hold his father's arms. He tries three times with no success. The fourth one would be successful, the poet says, but Odysseus stops him with a nod. Telemachus understands his father's plan, pretends weakness and quits, giving his turn to the suitors.

The first one to try is Liodes the seer, but he fails and foresees that this race will bring disaster. But Antinous the bolder one of the suitors reprimands him and suggests spreading hot fat to the bow to go soft. Everyone tries in turn but without success. Then Odysseus, dressed as a beggar, asks to try himself. Antinous offends him, but Penelope and Telemachus give him the bow. The servants, to whom Odysseus had revealed himself, immediately close the doors and leave the hall. Odysseus flexes the bow with ease and passes the arrow through the axes. The suitors panic and are speechless at the sight. Then Odysseus throws the rugs off his shoulders, redirects the bow towards the suitors and kills Antinous first. The suitors start threatening him, but when they hear Odysseus' accusations, they realize who he is and panic. Eurymachus asks for mercy and promises compensation in order to be saved. But Odysseus rejects the compromise and in the battle that follows, Eurymachus and Amphinomus are killed. Telemachus equips the team

with shields, spears and helmets and the battle is generalized. Axes, spears, swords, moaning and screams! Death spreads everywhere.

Thus, Odysseus and his team kill all the suitors. Then, Odysseus calls Euriclea, his faithful servant, who rejoices when she sees the dead suitors. He asks her to show him the unfaithful slaves and orders them to help carry the dead in the yard and clean the hall. Finally, Odysseus cleanses the palace of the murder with brimstone and fire and calls the faithful servants who welcome him with lit torches and gather around him full of love, love that brings tears in the hero's eyes.

With his son and his faithful servants Odysseus administered justice and brought peace in his house. Now he has to win his wife back.

5. Meeting Penelope

Euriclea, Penelope's faithful servant, runs to Penelope to tell her that Odysseus has returned:

"Wake up my sweetheart. Odysseus has returned to the palace. He has just killed the suitors and wants to see you."

Penelope does not believe her.

"Are you crazy or you just play with me? Get out of the room, now!"

But, Euriclea insists that Odysseus has returned.

"Penelope, believe me. Odysseus is that foreigner, the beggar who nobody cared for. Telemachus knew it, but kept it secret until they murdered the suitors."

Penelope moved jumps out of her bed.

"But how has Odysseus managed to kill the suitors alone?"

"I don't know! I only heard the moans of those dying, because I and the other maids were locked out of the palace. Tramping, moaning, crying, screams, shouts and begging. At some point Odysseus called us to the palace, where I saw him next to the bloody corpses. He was burning the bodies of the suitors and told me to call you."

Despite her maid's excitement, Penelope is cautious and believes that the killing of the suitors is the work of the gods, because her husband is lost far away from his homeland. She decides to go downstairs and see for herself what is really going on.

Walking over the threshold, she sees Odysseus, but she still doubts if it is really him and hesitates to talk to him. She stands opposite him shocked and frozen. At first she looks at him but then she looks away. Telemachus infuriated tells her:

"Mother what are you waiting for? Are you so hard-hearted?"

“I am so confused my son.”, Penelope answers." I do not know what to say or do. I want to talk with the man who stands opposite me. Leave us alone so that we can reveal the secrets that only the two of us know and then I will be sure that he is my husband.”

Odysseus addressing his son justifies Penelope:

“She is right not to believe me Telemachus. My messy appearance prevents her from recognizing me. Now we must plan how to deal with the fury of the Ithacans for the killing of the suitors.”

With his unparalleled cunningness, our hero suggests to organize a feast so that no one will find out about the killing.

Thus everybody washes, gets dressed richly and goes to the feast where men and women are dancing while the singer plays his guitar. The palace is full of light and all the by passers can hear the music and the dancers’ shoes hitting the ground. Everybody outside the palace believes that the queen has finally decided to get married.

Then Brynomi, the cellar woman, helps Odysseus to get washed, covers his body with oil and gives him nice clothes to wear. Goddess Athena embellishes his appearance, making him look like a god.

Odysseus sits down on the throne opposite Penelope. After accusing her for her unbridled heart, he orders Euriclea to make a separate bed. Then, Penelope, seizing the opportunity tries to test him. She asks Euriclea to move the bed, Odysseus had made on his own before leaving for Troy, outside the palace. Listening to these words, Odysseus heartbroken answers to his wife:

“Woman, what are you saying? No mortal can move the bed, but only a god, because when I was younger, I built the whole bedroom around a thick olive trunk and cut the bed off with an axe and decorated it with silver and ivory. Do you remember how much I loved making it?”

Penelope moved by the revelation of their secret signs, falls into his arms crying.

“Odysseus, don’t get angry with me. I was just afraid that the gods, who have envied our happiness and sent us numerous disasters, were trying to fool me. Now, however I am sure that you are my real husband, because you have revealed the secret that only the two of us know.”

They snuggle till dawn crying filled with happiness. They haven’t seen each other for twenty years and they just can’t have enough love.

That way Odyssey ends with the triumph of love and feelings. But the “Odyssey” of Odysseus will continue, just like every man’s “Odyssey” who struggles to overcome his fate and reach his own Ithaca.