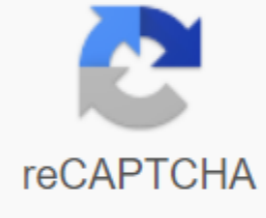




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Gods and goddesses in the odyssey

It can be tempting to start teaching Homer's *Odyssey* by doing student background research on Greek gods and goddesses. With twelve Olympians it looks like a nice group project to divide children and their research domains, symbols, Roman names, etc. And then they offer to class, everyone takes notes, and on Friday there's a quiz. Please don't. I've done it that way, and I think it's confusing for the kids. There are better ways to start *Odyssey* and help kids have a powerful experience with a lot of other culture and a very unusual text (at least in their experience). Why not memorize the Olympians? Most of the Olympians play a very limited role. Poor Hestia never appears. Aphrodite and Ares appear mostly in a story told by Democritus in Book 8. Even Hera, Zeus's wife, is mentioned only a few times. But is there no value in children who know the god of war and the goddess of love? Sure, I won't argue with it (and in fact I can argue for it in a future post!). The problem is if you start *Odyssey* by focusing on these characters, expect kids to play a big part in the story. When they don't appear in the first few books, they're confused and feel like they're missing something. What more a lot of other characters appear. And who can Remember Aegisthus, Eurymachus, and Antinous when you try to keep Ares and Artemis straight? In a world where you can Google the twelve Olympians in a second, should we really memorize them? On the other hand, cultural conflict is very present today. And spending more time on a less number of gods and goddesses can allow your students to dive deeper into the world of epic and understand its culture better. The Tense Triangle Image Credit: Carole Raddato I would recommend focusing on what I call The Tense Triangle farm. The Tense Triangle is the conflict between Poseidon, who wants to harm Odysseus, Athena, who wants to help Odysseus, and Zeus, who is caught in the middle. The Tense Triangle is at the heart of a lot of *Odyssey*, so it helps children make predictions and handle the unusual structure and lack of chronology. There are also many interesting questions related to The Tense Triangle. Why is Poseidon so angry with Odysseus? is a good question students can read in the first 9 books. How do the gods and goddess may balance? or are the gods and goddess limited by anything other than one another? is good as well. Those questions help students understand the culture at a deeper level. After all, it was a functional religion for thousands of years, not a bunch of made-up bedtime stories. Anyone else? Of course, there are many and many other characters, both mortal and immortal, except The Tense Triangle. Hermes' as a messenger is important to the story, and he gets my voice for immortal #4. After that, I will focus on the nymph Calypso and Circe. They bring other interesting questions about hierarchy and control, not to mention gender. How powerful is a female immortal in a male-dominated world? Calypso's speech in Book 5 speaks to this tension. After some close reading for understanding, students can relate to the idea of a double standard and often have a lot to say about it. How location works in *Odyssey* is also an interesting idea that you can dig into deeper with less immortal to worry about. Calypso and Circe seem to have a great deal of power over a limited amount of space, just as Penelope does. And the Tense Triangle conflict is implemented by the fact that Poseidon is gone in Ethiopia in Book 1. Questions about how travel status builds (think Telemachus), which has control over what space, how should hosts treat guests, and that limits the knowledge of immortal students helping to work on two levels. They help students understand the events in *The Odyssey* as they are deeply relevant to most of the events. But they also help students deepen their understanding of Greek culture. To sum me up on teaching the immortal in *The Odyssey*: Less memorizing gods and goddess + more in-depth exploration of culture = happier and better informed students. Hope it helps you enjoy your time sailing with Odysseus! The Odyssean gods are the ancient Greek gods referred to in Homer's *Odyssey*. The story's main gods include Athena, Poseidon, Calypso and Circe; small gods include Ino, Hermes, Zeus and Heracles. The *Odyssey*'s great gods include Athena, Poseidon, Calypso, and Circe. Athena Helmed Athena, of the Velletri type. Roman copy (1st century) of a Greek original by Kresilas, c. 430 BC. Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom and battle strategy, and was also the patron goddess of heroes. Odysseus was a great hero among the Greeks, and had Athena's favor and help in many of his exploits. She was also a key goddess in the story of *Odyssey* as a divine assistant to Odysseus on his journey home. From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Athena helps Odysseus. Her first act the readers saw persuaded Zeus to send Hermes to Ogygia, Calypso's island, to inform her that it was Zeus's will that Odysseus continued his journey home. Since no god could stem or evade Zeus, Calypso was forced to let Odysseus go despite her own wishes to let him stay on the island forever. Athena also ensures Odysseus's future by other characters, such as the Phaeacian Princess Nausicaa. In Book 6, she makes sure that Nausicaa Odysseus meets elsewhere on the island by coming to her in a dream and insisting her to go to the river to Was. Odysseus was in a terrible state of nudity and fame Initially met Nausicaa, but Athena gave Nausicaa the courage to stand her ground so she could get around to help him. Athena also did minor things to help out Odysseus, such as improving his appearances so that he is respected by other characters. An example of direct help by Athena includes when she led Odysseus to the palace of the Phaeacian in disguising a beggar. She also helps him directly by transforming him into an old beggar in the later books of the *Odyssey*. Athena also indirectly helped Odysseus by planting ideas in his head and missing the spear of the roaders to miss their target when Odysseus eventually engages them in book 22. Poseidon a statue of Neptune in the city of Bristol. Poseidon is the Greek god of the sea and the brother of Zeus, Hades, Hera, Hestia and Demeter. He tries to make Odysseus's journey much harder than it actually needs to be. He seems to regret the *Odyssey* and actively causes problems for Odysseus in sight. Although he cannot kill Odysseus because it is his destiny to return home, he makes every attempt to cause Odysseus to suffer. Odysseus earns Poseidon's wrath by blinding Polyphemus. While the blinding alone could have been justifiable for the poor abuse by Polyphemus to his guests, Odysseus's pride was really what Poseidon's wrath went on. While Odysseus left the island of the Cyclops, he scraped and spoke on Polyphemus, accusing him of being impenetrable. Polyphemus cried out that he was the son of Poseidon, but Odysseus did not believe him. To prove that he was indeed the son of Poseidon, Polyphemus cried out to his father and ordered Odysseus to never reach his house. In the *Odyssey*, Poseidon is a powerful and respected older god, as none of the other Olympic gods dare to call Odysseus and his fur while Poseidon is there to hear it. The council of gods who decided to release Odysseus from Calypso's island was held when Poseidon accepted a sacrifice in Ethiopia. Athena, out of respect for her uncle, doesn't show her support for Odysseus while Poseidon is around. When Odysseus sailed away from Calypso's island, Poseidon spotted him and caused him to be shipwrecked. In this way, Poseidon is seen as a very direct god in that he immediately causes problems for Odysseus himself instead of working by other ways like Athena. Calypso and Circe Now he is about to pine on an island, wrecking with grief (*Odyssey* V): Calypso and Odysseus, by Arnold Böcklin, 1883 Two interesting goddesses in the *Odyssey* are Calypso and Circe, which are both friendly and hostile reactions to *Odyssey* Calypso rescued Odysseus after his ship and crew were destroyed by the storm created by Zeus Odysseus crew killed Helios' sun cattle, even after a warning of She tended to his needs on her isolated island and gave him her lover. In total, Calypso held Odysseus captive for seven years and she hoped he would stay there forever as her husband. Since Calypso was a daughter of a titan, Odysseus could not argue or resist the goddess's desires, and it took the divine intervention of Zeus to secure Odysseus's passage on his next destination. As she appeared hostile to Odysseus in her actions to keep him captive for so long against his will, Calypso really gives Odysseus. She feeds and neglects him and allows him to wander the isles on his own will. She doesn't carry him any unwillingness as he prepares to leave her island and help him out by the best places to gain wood from her island for his ship and provide the tools for building it. Calypso can be seen as a friendly goddess, but a little sharp tongue too. When she learns that she must release Odysseus, she criticises the gods and how they are able to have business and sleep with mortal women, while Goddess suffers consequences if their intentions are not so pure. Circe, like Calypso, is also a goddess found in an isolated place, with her home under dense bushveld. Circe is initially hostile to Odysseus and his husbands and attempts to turn them all to pigs with a potion who slipped into the wine with honey she offers to them, but with Hermes' help, Odysseus can enrol her and fit her. She returns all of Odysseus's men to their natural condition and offers them food and hospitality for one year. Unlike Calypso, Circe seems to be very unmotivated with Odysseus. She is of great help to him and his homeward journey. There are other gods in the *Odyssey* who play small roles to help Odysseus's homeward journey. Because of their small role, there are very few that can be said about them. Ino It is not known why Ino helps him, but she does. Ino gives Odysseus a magical veil that captivates him after Poseidon (god of the sea) sinks his ship. She leads him to the country of the Phaeacians, where Nausicaa and Arete help him return to Ithaca - after telling them the story of his 'odyssey' between the war at Troy and his achieving Scherie (also known as Phaeacia - country of the Phaeacians). Hermes Hermes is patron of Travellers, Messenger of the gods and the king of thieves and one of the 12 Olympic gods, Hermes appeared three times in the *Odyssey*. The first time is to deliver a message to Calypso to return Odysseus home. The second time, he seems Odysseus to warn him about Circe and provide the necessary information that Odysseus needs to put Circe in submission. The third time he was sent to escort the spirits of the suitors from the halls of Odysseus' house to the underworld. Zeus Zeus does very little in the *Odyssey* apart from and send about. He is King of the gods and God of Thunder, lightning, air, and beautiful women dancing (and the Patron of guest friendship (xenia) and oath too). He appeared at the beginning of the *Odyssey* where he complains that men blame the gods for the results of their own actions. He is convinced by Athena in book one to send Hermes to prompt Calypso to leave Odysseus Ogygia; and in book 12, at Helios' request, he sent a storm to punish Odysseus' men for killing the cattle on his island (they also swore that they would not touch the cows, so in addition to offending Zeus in his role as custodian of oaths). Probably, the whole plot of the *Odyssey* revolves around the parcels' actions as bad guests who offend Zeus in his role as patron of xenia. Heracles Odysseus met Heracles in the Underworld and mentioned that it was only his ghost when his immortal half was sent to Olympus where he married Hebe. Aeolus Strictly speaks a king and not a god in the *Odyssey* (although he is immortal elsewhere), Aeolus is custodian of the Winds. Aeolus gives Odysseus a tightly closed bag full of captive winds so he could easily sail to Ithaca. After their failure, Aeolus refused to provide further assistance because he believed their short and unsuccessful journey meant the gods had not benefited them. Helios God of the Sun, and in some translations called Hyperion, Helios' cattle are impenetrably murdered and eaten by Odysseus's crew. The guardians of the island, Helios' daughters, tell their father about this. Helios appeals to Zeus and says he asked him to get rid of Odysseus's men or he would take the Sun and shine it in the Underworld. Zeus destroys the ship with his lightning bolt and kills all the men except for Odysseus. See also Homer's *Odyssey* Homer Greek gods Homer's Ithaca Odyssean Wicca, a Wiccan tradition created in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in the late 1970s detected from

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