

GREEK MYTH
A supernatural story
from ancient Greece

Readers Theater Play



**THE
MONSTER
IN THE CAVE**

IN THIS FAMOUS STORY FROM
THE ODYSSEY, A BRAVE HERO GETS
TRAPPED WITH **THIS GUY!**

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TURN THE PAGE ➔
to perform this crazy play.

CHARACTERS

ALL CHORUS: Greek chorus 1, 2 & 3 in unison

***HOMER:** author of *The Odyssey*

***GREEK CHORUS 1, 2 & 3 (GC1, GC2, GC3)**

THALES, EOS, LINUS, BENDUS, TELAMON,

SIPPAS, ABUS, MIKON, & CARPUS: members of Odysseus' crew

***ODYSSEUS:** hero of the Trojan War

SHEEP (a small group)

***POLYPHEMUS** [pol-uh-FEE-muhs]: a Cyclops

CYCLOPS 1, 2 & 3

Circle the character you will play.

**Starred characters are major roles.*

AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

Odysseus and Polyphemus each have different character traits that they rely on to try to defeat each other. Look for those traits as you read.

PROLOGUE

ALL CHORUS: Welcome, Homer, famous poet of ancient Greece.

HOMER: Today we present a tale from *The Odyssey*.

ALL CHORUS: *The Odyssey*:

GC1: . . . a great **epic** poem . . .

GC2: . . . about the great hero Odysseus . . .

GC3: . . . on his journey home from the great Trojan War.

HOMER: Odysseus had helped lead the Greeks to victory, but the war had been long and bloody, and Odysseus and his men were praying for a swift and safe journey home to Ithaca. However . . .

ALL CHORUS: . . . this was not to be.

SCENE 1

HOMER: Odysseus is leading his fleet of 12 ships across the Aegean Sea. The men grow weary in the hot sun.

THALES: Odysseus, for you the men will row until they drop, but they are weak from hunger.

EOS: We are out of food.

LINUS: And we are nearly out of water.

ODYSSEUS: There are some islands ahead. Look at the small one—it appears uninhabited.

EOS: Isn't that too close to the island of the Cyclopes?

LINUS: They say the Cyclopes are giants that enjoy the

The word *cyclopean* comes from the myth of the Cyclopes. It means huge or massive. *Cyclopes* is the plural of *Cyclops*.

taste of human flesh—that they're more powerful than the gods!

ODYSSEUS: More powerful than Zeus? I think not. But we will keep to the smaller island.

THALES: I suppose it's either that or starve to death.

HOMER: Odysseus leads his men to the beach. The island is fertile and wooded.

GC1: There are wild grapes and many goats—

GC2: —*hundreds* of goats.

GC3: Goats everywhere!

HOMER: The men restock their ships then prepare a great feast on the beach. As they eat, they look toward the island of the Cyclopes with curiosity . . .

ALL CHORUS: . . . and fear.

SCENE 2

HOMER: The next morning, Odysseus calls a **council**.

ODYSSEUS: I want to visit the Cyclopes.

BENDUS: But they are said to be monsters!

ODYSSEUS: I shall see for myself. Let the bravest among you join me in exploring their land.

HOMER: Odysseus anchors one ship close to the island. He and 12 volunteers row ashore in a small boat.

ODYSSEUS: Let's see who lives in that cave up the hill.

HOMER: When the men get to the cave, no one is there. Inside are many treasures . . .

GC1: Cheese!

GC2: Lambs!

GC3: Wheat and milk!

TELAMON: We should take this food to our ships.

SIPPAS: Think how much better our trip home will be!

ODYSSEUS: No. I want to meet the Cyclops who lives here. Maybe he will give us these things as gifts.

HOMER: Grumbling, the men help themselves to the cheese while waiting for the Cyclops to return. After a while, the ground begins to shake.

ABUS: What is happening?

MIKON: Zeus, have mercy on us!

ALL CHORUS: The men are right to be afraid.

SCENE 3

HOMER: The men hide in the shadows as the Cyclops drives his flock of sheep into the cave.

SHEEP: Baaa. Baaa.

GC1: The Cyclops is huge. His face is pocked with boils.

GC2: He has but one colossal eye . . .

GC3: . . . right in the center of his forehead.

CARPUS (*whispering*): What a monster!

ABUS (*whispering*): What's he doing with that rock?

MIKON: He's sealing off the cave opening! It'll take a legion of men to move that boulder.

BENDUS: How will we get out?

HOMER: The monster's eye blinks with surprise.

POLYPHEMUS: Hello?

Hello? Who is there?

HOMER: Odysseus steps forward.

ODYSSEUS: Hello, we are weary travelers on our way home. We humbly ask for your hospitality—and may you fear the wrath of Zeus should you choose to treat us unkindly.

POLYPHEMUS: Fool, you know nothing of this island. I am Polyphemus, son of Poseidon, god of the sea! I do not care about Zeus. We Cyclopes are much stronger than he.

GC1: The monster stares at Odysseus with his one . . .

GC2: . . . colossal . . .

GC3: . . . eye.



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

POLYPHEMUS: Where is your ship?

ODYSSEUS: It . . . was destroyed. We barely escaped the jaws of death.

HOMER: Suddenly, the Cyclops grabs two men and tosses them into his mouth.

ODYSSEUS: Nooooo!

TELAMON: To arms! Drive your swords into him!

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

HOMER: The Cyclops slurps down some milk, stretches out, and falls asleep. The men weep . . .

ALL CHORUS: . . . as Odysseus plots.

SCENE 4

HOMER: After a restless night, Odysseus and his men are jolted awake.

POLYPHEMUS: Wake up, strangers! It's breakfast time!

HOMER: The Cyclops snatches two men and gobbles them up. Then he shoves aside the stone.

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

SHEEP: Baaa! Baaa!

SIPPAS: Maybe we can make a run for it.

GC1: Umm . . . not really.

GC2: Polyphemus quickly replaces the stone—

GC3: —the *giant* stone.

BENDUS: What now?

ODYSSEUS: I have a plan.

ALL CHORUS: Odysseus has a plan.

SCENE 5

HOMER: Later, Polyphemus returns with his flock.

SHEEP: Baaa! Baaa!

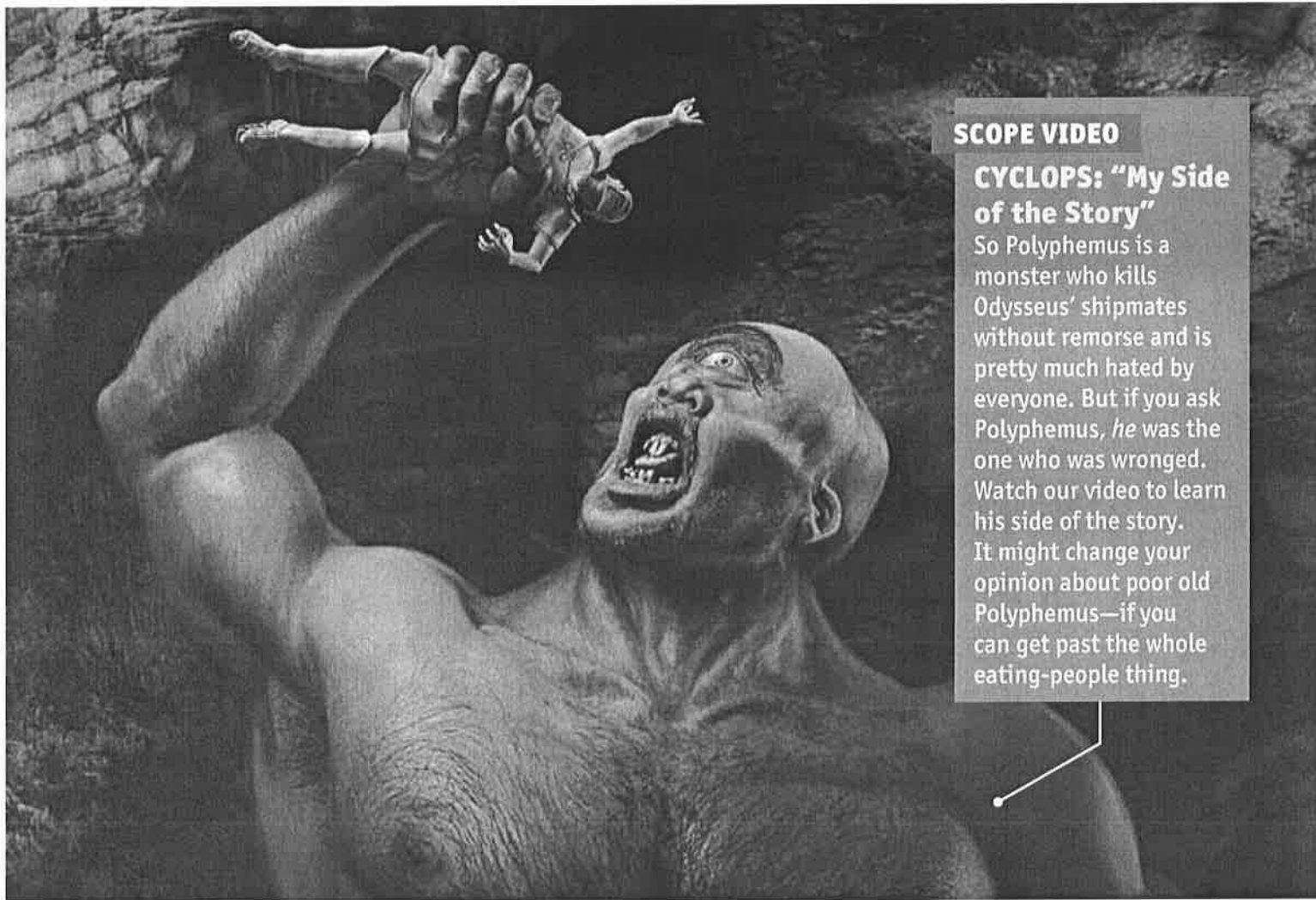
HOMER: He seals the cave and eats two more men.

POLYPHEMUS: You see, humans, Zeus led you to me that I may pick my teeth with your bones!



When it comes to Odysseus, people have different opinions. Is he clever to think his way out of bad situations—or a cunning villain who takes advantage of others? The ancient Romans thought he was cruel; his trickery violated their sense of honor. The ancient Greeks thought he was a great hero who used his brain—not just his strength—to achieve victory.

What do you think and why?



SCOPE VIDEO

CYCLOPS: “My Side of the Story”

So Polyphemus is a monster who kills Odysseus’ shipmates without remorse and is pretty much hated by everyone. But if you ask Polyphemus, *he* was the one who was wronged. Watch our video to learn his side of the story. It might change your opinion about poor old Polyphemus—if you can get past the whole eating-people thing.

SCENE 6

ODYSSEUS: Enough, Cyclops! That’s six of my men you’ve devoured! How can you treat your visitors this way? And to think that I brought you a drink offering!

POLYPHEMUS: A drink offering?

ODYSSEUS: Yes, the nectar of the gods. Here, I give it to you that you might have mercy on us and let us go.

HOMER: Polyphemus takes the cup of wine and drinks.

POLYPHEMUS: That’s delicious. I like you, Small One. Tell me your name, and I will give you a present. But first, give me more of this drink!

GC1: Three times Odysseus fills the cup.

GC2: Three times the Cyclops drinks.

GC3: Three times . . . uh . . . yes, *three times!*

ODYSSEUS: Cyclops, you asked my name. My name is Nobody. Now give me the present you promised.

POLYPHEMUS: Ha! This is the present I have for you, Nobody: I will eat your men first. I will save you for last.

HOMER: The Cyclops falls over and begins to snore.

ALL CHORUS: His peaceful slumber will not last.

HOMER: Earlier, Odysseus and his men had carved the tip of a log into a point and hidden it in the shadows.

ODYSSEUS (whispering): Retrieve the log and heat the point in the fire!

HOMER: When the timber is glowing, the men hoist it onto their shoulders.

ODYSSEUS: We must jam it into his eye with all our might! On my count: One . . . two . . . three!

GC1: The ugly eye sputters and hisses.

GC2: The boiling blood bubbles.

GC3: The hair **singes** and crackles!

POLYPHEMUS: Ahhh! My eye! What have you done?! I’m blind! I’m blind!

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

CYCLOPS 1: What’s wrong, Polyphemus?

CYCLOPS 2: Why are you making such a racket?

CYCLOPS 3: Is somebody doing you harm?

POLYPHEMUS: Ahh! Nobody has blinded me! Nobody is trying to kill me!

CYCLOPS 1: If nobody is hurting you, then be quiet so we can get some sleep!

HOMER: The other Cyclopes leave. In the morning, Polyphemus gropes about until he finds the stone. He pushes it away and sits in the doorway.

SHEEP: Baaa! Baaa!

CARPUS: Now what?

ABUS: How will we get past him?

ODYSSEUS: I have a plan . . .

ALL CHORUS: Odysseus has another plan.

HOMER: As the sheep pass, Polyphemus feels their backs to make sure that none of the men are escaping.

GC1: What he doesn't know . . .

GC2: What he couldn't guess . . .

GC3: . . . is that the men are clinging to the sheep's bellies.

HOMER: Odysseus rides out last, under the largest ram. Polyphemus stops it and strokes its back.

POLYPHEMUS: My good ram, why are you the last to leave my cave today? Is it because you know your master has lost his eye? I will have Nobody's life yet. I will bash his brains in!

ALL CHORUS: The Cyclops plots his revenge.

SCENE 7

HOMER: The men take the sheep to their ship.

THALES: Odysseus, you're alive! We thought you'd perished!

EOS: But where are the others?

ODYSSEUS: A terrible monster ate them. Now quick, get these sheep on board. And hush! The monster no longer has his eye, but he still has his ears.

THALES: Man the oars, men. The oars!

HOMER: Once the ship is a sufficient distance from the shore, Odysseus calls to the Cyclops.

ODYSSEUS: Cyclops! Oh Cyclops!

HOMER: The Cyclops rushes to the edge of the sea.

ODYSSEUS (jeering): You should have taken better measure of me before swallowing my men, Polyphemus. I warned you that Zeus would punish you for your treachery!

POLYPHEMUS: Ahh! I shall have my revenge on Nobody!

HOMER: The Cyclops hurls a boulder at the ship. 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 wretched brute!

MIKON: Please, Odysseus, do not provoke the monster!

ODYSSEUS: Cyclops, if anyone asks you who it was who put your eye out, you can tell them it was the **vallant** warrior of Ithaca, hero of the Trojan War, Odysseus!

GC1: Modesty . . .

GC2: . . . as you can see . . .

GC3: . . . is not Odysseus' thing.

HOMER: The Cyclops throws another boulder at them. It splashes behind the ship, creating a wave that pushes them further out to sea.

POLYPHEMUS: **Avenge** me, great Poseidon! Grant that Odysseus never reaches his home alive!

HOMER: Odysseus sails into the setting sun, celebrating his victory. He has no idea that Poseidon is furious . . . and things are about to get much, much worse.

ALL CHORUS: But that is a story for another day. ●



Some scholars think the Greeks mistook dwarf elephant skulls for Cyclopes skulls. That hole in the middle looks like an eye socket, but it's where the trunk attaches.

CONTEST

Write About Character What character traits helped Odysseus escape the Cyclops? Do you think both Odysseus and the Cyclops got what they deserved? Why or why not? Answer all three questions, and be sure to use at least three pieces of text evidence to support your arguments. Send your entry to **ODYSSEUS CONTEST**. Five winners will get Anne Ursu's *The Shadow Thieves*. See page 2 for details.



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