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Christina Balit , Hugh Lupton , Daniel Morden

The Adventures of Odysseus

United Kingdom (2006)

TAGS: Athena Charybdis Circe Cyclops / Cyclopes Hermes Magic Odysseus / Ulysses Penelope Scylla Trojan War





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Adventures of Odysseus
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Europe, North America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2006
First Edition Details	Hugh Lupton, Daniel Morden, *The Adventures of Odysseus*. London: Barefoot Books, 2006, 128 pp.
ISBN	9781846864469
Genre	Historical fiction, Mythologies
Target Audience	Children (7–10 year olds)
Author of the Entry	Constantine Christoforou, University of Roehampton, christoc1@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



Christina Balit , b. 1961
(Author, Illustrator)

Christina Balit was born in the UK, but spent most of her childhood in the Middle East. She studied at the Chelsea School of Art and Royal College of Art. Her distinctive style of illustrations is founded on the use of watercolours. Balit's work covers a range of mythological traditions including Greek, Roman, Biblical, and Babylonian. Regarding classical myth specifically, Balit has written *The Scarab's Secret, Atlantis: The Legend of a Lost City*, introduction by Geoffrey Ashe, Henry Holt (New York, NY), 2000 and *Escape from Pompeii*, Henry Holt (New York, NY), 2003. As well as illustrating James Riordan, *The Twelve Labors of Hercules*, Millbrook Press (Brookfield, CT), 1997. She has also illustrated books of fairy tale, the solar system and tales from the Bible. Christina is the winner of The English Association's 4–11 Award for the Best Children's Illustrated Book of 2001, Key Stage 2 Non Fiction Illustration Award in 2002 for *The Kingdom of the Sun* and UK Reading Association Award for *Ishtad & Tammuz* among other awards.

She says of her work "My need to make something from nothing is the reason my blood runs, and I need to keep it thick. I read somewhere that Jacques-Yves Cousteau said "If we didn't die, we would not appreciate life as we do. I don't fear dying, but I can't imagine how people live if they don't 'make' things." (Source here, accessed: August 7, 2018).

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

barefootbooks.com (accessed: July 4, 2018).

biography.jrank.org (accessed: February 12, 2021).

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Hugh Lupton , b. 1952
(Author)

Hugh Lupton is a British children's author, oral storyteller, poet, and lyricist based in Norfolk, England. Lupton has a career spanning over 30 years which has seen him work in schools, run workshops and festivals and perform in theatres. He was influential in the movement to revive live storytelling. His work frequently focuses on retelling myths and folk tales. Lupton co-founded the Company of Storytellers (with Ben Haggarty and Sally Pomme Clayton) in 1985 which brought storytelling to an adult audience. Along with Daniel Morden, Lupton has co-authored 5 books on classical mythology- *The Adventures of Odysseus* (2006), *The Adventures of Achilles* (2012), *Theseus and the Minotaur* (2013), *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2013), and *Demeter and Persephone* (2013). In 2006, Daniel and Hugh received the Classical Association's Award for "the most significant contribution to the public understanding of classics".

Sources:

Official website (accessed: February 12, 2021).

wikipedia.org (accessed: February 12, 2021).

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Daniel Morden , b. 1964
(Author)

Daniel Morden is a British author and storyteller based in Abergavenny, Wales. Morden has been a professional storyteller since 1989. In 2006, Morden won the UK Classical Association's prize for contributing to public understanding of classics. In 2007 he won the Tir na n-Og Award for *Dark Tales from the Woods*, based on Welsh folktales (Gomer Press, 2005; 2nd ed. Pont Books, 2013), and he won the prize again in 2013 for *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, a retelling of the Mabinogion, a fourteenth-century collection of ancient Welsh myths (Gomer Press, 2012).

Source:

wikipedia.org (accessed: February 12, 2021).

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Additional information

Summary

This book offers a compact retelling of the trials and tribulations of Odysseus' journey home from Troy. The prologue begins with the judgement of Paris and how this led to a 10 year long war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The prologue explains that the Greeks won the war, retrieved Helen and began their journeys home with ships full of loot. The book proceeds to tell the story of Odysseus' journey home beginning 9 years in as he washes up on the shores of Phaeacia. In the same manner as *The Odyssey*, Odysseus recounts the turbulent journey he has been on to the Phaecians who are fascinated by his stories. Odysseus recalls his encounter with the Cyclops and how his men had to blind the great monster and escape clinging, to the stomachs of his sheep. He speaks of King Aeolus and his gift of a sack of winds. He tells the tale of Circe transforming his men into pigs, and how he had to seek divine help to fight off her charms and spells. He describes his emotional journey to the underworld and terrifying meeting with Scylla and Charybdis. After sharing his stories, King Alcinous grants Odysseus his wish of a safe journey home and we are then told of his reunion with his son Telemachus in Eumaeus' hut and the subsequent plan to free the palace of the suitors who have been pestering Penelope for 20 years. Odysseus gets his revenge and murders the suitors in a bloody affair before the story ends with Odysseus and his family eating together and sharing stories of the past 20 years.

Analysis

This book provides a well-rounded account of Odysseus' journey home from Troy, covering most of the events that appear in Homer's *Odyssey*. The book contains elements of Homeric epic style and narrative including lines such as "The next morning when dawn took her golden throne" (p. 59) which appears to be a nod to "when dawn appeared, fresh and rosy fingered" (*Il* 1.477). The book also does well to represent Odysseus' emotional state in a way that speaks to a young audience, he is constantly seen crying and troubling to come to terms with some of his actions.

In the first chapter "The Stranger" Odysseus is brought to tears by the bard's tale of Troy and he proceeds to offer insight into the mindset of a Greek warrior. Odysseus says that the idea that he is a "hero" or a "man of honour" is laughable (p. 16). Odysseus recalls the day

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Menelaus' Lieutenant came to Ithaca to ask for Odysseus to accompany them to Troy and he attempted to fake madness as he had no desire to fight "for the sake of another man's wounded pride" (p. 17). He states that "All of us went a little mad" during the war due to betrayal, arguments and interventions of the Gods (p. 18). This humble and wounded representation of Odysseus who makes it very clear that he is not proud of his actions and does not in any way consider himself a hero is a considered choice for a young audience's first introduction to the man. On top of this, it is an introduction to the toll war can take on a man's mental health. Odysseus does not come across as arrogant in any way and "pride" and "honour" do not appear to be at the forefront of his mind. The authors have made Odysseus a more relatable character to a young audience with these moments of weakness and self-reflection. Alternatively, the authors have projected their modern moral interpretation on the actions of Odysseus. The ancient audience very much would have seen Odysseus as a great hero, though the narrative constructed for modern readers is much to the contrary.

The authors have made a conscious decision not to shy away from the violence that Odysseus and his men would have encountered on their journey home, and this is evident in their conflict with the Cyclops. Odysseus explains that the Cyclops grabbed one of his men, smashed his head against the cave and "his brains splattered against the walls and floor" (p. 23). This is a graphic description for a young audience and Odysseus ends his description with the simple sentence- "We were horrified". This narrative is close to the original in its content and tone, the authors capture the hopelessness of Odysseus and his men and the brute force of the Cyclops.

In his interaction with Hermes (pp. 43–44), Odysseus gives us an insight into the relationship between mortals and the Gods. Whilst approaching the home of Circe, "all of the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I knew this sensation. I knew I was in the presence of a God or Goddess." (p. 43). Odysseus explains that Gods can visit you in dreams, sometimes they tell you the truth, sometimes they tell you half-truths, but sometimes they lie. The combination of Odysseus being overwhelmed by the presence of a god but at the same time warning that they do not always have your best interests at heart and could even lie to you is a good introduction to the psychology of the Gods of Olympus for young children.

Slight adjustments to the narrative create a different tone at the

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book's end. After Odysseus brutally slaughters the suitors in his palace, Odysseus tells a visibly excited Eurycleia that it is impious to gloat over the dead and that he and Telemachus will see that the suitors are burned respectfully. On top of this, the maids and servants who are also murdered in the Odyssey for having sex with the suitors instead grab buckets and sponges and clean the halls, there is no mention of a punishment for them. Odysseus and Penelope are reunited and they sit as a family and exchange stories and feast. A very satisfying ending for a young audience, the hero comes home and restores order and the family sits for dinner and catches up on lost time. In the Odyssey of course, Odysseus is pursued by the fathers of the suitors who want revenge for their sons, it is only for an intervention from Athena that the violence does not continue. The authors may have chosen to end the narrative where they did and on a lighter tone as it is more easily digested by a young audience, the hanging of the maidservants for example may have been too disturbing for young readers. However, this choice may have been a nod to the ongoing debate surrounding the ending of the *Odyssey** as some believe the original narrative does indeed end with the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope and the olive tree.

The illustrations accompany the book well; most pages have either an illustration bordering the text or a full page depiction of an event in the narrative. The illustrations add nice classical touches such as Athena being accompanied by an owl and wearing a helmet and carrying a shield and Hermes being depicted in his winged sandals. The illustrations are colourful but cold and sharp almost icon like in style. Depictions of Odysseus with a tear in his eye and his men with their heads in their hands do well to express the sadness and trauma of the journey home.

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* See for example – Scott, J., "The Close of the *Odyssey*", *The Classical Journal* 12.6 (1917): 397–405 (accessed: February 12, 2021).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Athena Charybdis Circe Cyclops / Cyclopes Hermes Magic Odysseus / Ulysses Penelope Scylla Trojan War

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Conflict Death Good vs evil Heroism Intellect Journeys Judgement Masculinity Revenge Tricksters Violence War

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