

The Odyssey

Build Vocabulary: Words in Context

The Odyssey is one of the most studied works of literature in the world. Reading Homer's epic can be a challenge, but it will also be rewarding. When you come across words or phrases you don't understand, you may use context clues to help you. The following are three common types of clues. For each type of clue guess the meaning of the underlined word in the example provided.

Restatement or Apposition Clue: A word or idea is restated in different words.

1. Use a restatement or apposition clue to guess the definition of *odyssey* in the following example:

Homer's *Odyssey* tells the story of an odyssey: a long and adventurous voyage.

Comparison/Contrast Clue: A word is explained by comparing it to another word or idea.

2. Use a comparison/contrast clue to guess the definition of *epics* in the following example:

Do you enjoy reading epics, or do you prefer shorter, less formal poems?

Examples Clue: Examples help explain the meaning of a word.

3. Use an examples clue to guess the definition of *deities* in the following example:

Various deities figure in the action *The Odyssey*, including Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

Read the following sentences from The Odyssey and figure out the meaning of each underlined word, using only the context clues in the sentence (s). Which type of clue helped you guess each word?

4. Homer begins with an invocation, or prayer, in which he calls upon a Muse.

5. Her ladyship Calypso clung to him in her sea-hollowed caves—a nymph, immortal and most beautiful, who craved him for her own.

6. Ornate birds here rested their stretched wings—horned owls, falcons, cormorants...

7. As Calypso serves him ambrosia and nectar, Hermes delivers the message [from Zeus] that she must release Odysseus. The strong god glittering left her as he spoke, and now her ladyship, having given heed to Zeus' mandate, went to find Odysseus.

8. Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north a storm against the ships, and driving veils of squall moved down like night on land and sea.