



2002

The Odyssey

Arit Woolf

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Redmond, Diane. *The Odyssey*. A & C Black, 1998. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Arit Woolf

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre:

Subject:

A 7-11 Reviewed by Arit Woolf

This retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey* starts directly after the Greeks conquered the Trojans in the ten-year Trojan War. Odysseus, a Greek hero, is ready to go home to Ithaca to be with his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus.

This play covers his ten-year journey home, which includes all the adventures and challenges Odysseus and his crew had to face. Poseidon, the god of the sea, is determined to prevent Odysseus and his crew from returning home while Athene, goddess of wisdom, is determined to help them reach their destination. They face Polyphemus the Cyclops, Circe the witch, Scylla the six-headed monster, the Sirens, Charbydis the deadly whirlpool, Apollo's sacred bull, and a trip down to Hades. Finally, at the end of the play, Odysseus returns home to find suitors fighting over his wife. Knowing he has returned, Penelope sets up a challenge for her suitors which Odysseus wins and thereafter reclaims his wife and throne.

This is a useful, simple, straightforward play to help children understand and enjoy Homer's epic story, *The Odyssey*. Redmond sets the play up so it is very simple for directors to put together during the production process as well. She includes detailed descriptions of various ways to stage the performance, scenery and props, lighting, casting and auditions, the main characters, the stage management team, costumes, music, and sound effects. Every scene has a title and specific location. The play consists of twenty-five plus actors and last about forty-five to fifty minutes.

The play is not only a great play to teach children about Greek mythology but also helps evoke different emotions in both actors and audiences. There are moments when actors will scream and shout, and others when they will need to be silent and thoughtful. There are moments that are hilarious and others that are more emotional. Only one thing may need to be considered about this play, and that is that it can be a little violent at times. There are just a few moments when things are a little gruesome, but that comes with the nature of Greek plays and can always be toned down depending on how the director handles it.