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Odysseus



Synopsis

One of the greatest legends in the world is brought to life in ODYSSEUS, the first book of the four-volume HEROES series. Author Geraldine McCaughrean's taught prose brings a modern, thriller-like immediacy to the ancient story, while still retaining the characters, details and even some of the rhythms of the epic poem. Odysseus and his loyal troops narrowly escape being eaten by the Cyclops, shipwrecked by Scylla and Charybdis, and turned into pigs by the beautiful Circe. The company must travel to Hell (or Hades) and back, dodge the constant pursuit of the vengeful Poseidon, and row across oceans in order to get back home where Odysseus' wife, Penelope fends off a gaggle of greedy suitors bent on taking Odysseus' throne. Filled with excitement and romance, ODYSSEUS makes a perfect sequel for any young readers interested in learning more about the Greek heroes portrayed in the summer 2004 blockbuster, TROY.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 5-9 McCaughrean delves right into the epic story—Odysseus leaves Troy, trying to return to Ithaca, but is waylaid by many adventures and mishaps. When he angers Poseidon by putting out the eye of the Cyclops, things really go downhill—his men are turned to swine, he is kidnapped by a lovely nymph, and he faces Sirens and the churning whirlpool of Charybdis. After nearly 20 years, he returns home to his amazingly faithful wife and son, defeats her suitors, and is King of Ithaca once again. McCaughrean has written a compelling prose introduction to Homer's epic poem. In keeping with the style of the original, she uses Homeric refrains and colorful, poetic descriptions fashioned out of slightly challenging vocabulary. The story

is well suited to reading aloud (but recall that Odysseus does spend a lot of time with nymphs and seductresses). Violent events are not sugarcoated, and the narrative is filled with gory descriptions. A list of monsters and immortals and Odysseus's family tree appear at the beginning. With its fast-paced plot and lyrical language, this retelling makes a captivating read. —Angela J. Reynolds, Washington County Cooperative Library Services, Hillsboro, OR Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 4-8. With mounting suspense, wild action, and simple, rhythmic prose, this dramatic retelling of Homer's classic makes a gripping read-aloud as well as an exciting introduction to the story. Of course, it is the elemental myth of the search for home, but British writer McCaughrean avoids rhetoric and heavy symbolism, leaving the narrative to speak for itself. There's no illustration to overwhelm the words, allowing readers freedom to imagine Odysseus and his crew traveling across the "world-encircled sea," seduced by sirens and threatened by gruesome monsters. Just as dramatic is the story of Odysseus' son and his wife, waiting at home for his ship that "did not come and did not come and did not ever come." After hearing the story in class, students will want to read it alone. Three more books in the Heroes series, Perseus, Theseus, and Hercules, are scheduled for publication in 2005. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Great book. Perfect condition.

There is no record. I got clear CD in the box. Going to return.

My boys, 8 and 6, listened to the audio book of this story and remained excited and engaged during the whole telling. Unlike some authors, McCaughrean has not tried to improve or embellish the beauty of the story, but penned a masterpiece of abridgment that is true to the original.

This, the fourth and final book in Geraldine McCaughrean's stories of Greek heroes, (preceded by Perseus, Hercules (Heroes) and Theseus (Heroes)) is the only one based on actual literature: Homer's Odyssey. As such, McCaughrean does not have to pick and choose aspects of convoluted and often contradictory myths; her source material has already been written, providing a fairly linear sequence of events. As such, the stories concerning Odysseus have always been more straightforward than those of his peers. The retelling begins well after the Trojan War, with Odysseus

sailing home with his fleet of ships to his small kingdom of Ithaca, where his wife Penelope and son Telemachus await him. He has not seen them in ten long years, and the voyage home is a dangerous one. Meanwhile, interspersed with Odysseus's journey there are "updates" as to what is happening in Ithaca with his wife and child: Penelope has been bombarded with unwelcome suitors who fight for her hand in marriage, leading mother and son to make secret plans of their own to keep them at bay. McCaughrean keeps the most famous encounters of Odysseus's adventure (those that even those who have little knowledge of Greek myth are probably familiar with) such as the blinding of Polyphemus the Cyclops, the enchantress Circe turning men into swine, the twin terrors of Scylla and Charybdis. Along with these are slightly less-known experiences, such as his sojourn into the Underworld to speak with the blind seer Tiresias, hospitality in the household of the god of the winds, and the blissful stupor of the Lotus Eaters. All of this is more or less a condescended version of Homer's original text, but there is an amusing variation on the nymph Calypso who holds Odysseus "captive" on her paradisaical island. Turns out that living the life of luxury with an adoring female isn't quite as appealing as it sounds... McCaughrean even manages to sneak in minor episodes, such as the unheroic death of Elpenor (poor guy fell off a roof) and Odysseus's actions to secure his peaceful rest in the Underworld. Come to think of it, it's amazing just what is packed into a relatively slender book. The pace is rapid (getting slightly sluggish during the Scylla/Charybdis episode) and told in clear but beautiful prose; see here, a description of Circe's island: "Beyond the herb garden were olive groves and orchards of lemons, apples and limes. Vines entwined the marble colonnades, and hives shimmered with the early morning movement of bees. Tall, dark cypresses swayed like dancers, and the soft green of pine forests was sprinkled with asphodels and orchids." Odysseus himself closely resembles Homer's portrayal of the man: a typical "hero" as the Greeks would have considered one. By contemporary standards he is undoubtedly egocentric as well, yet (as with all her retellings) McCaughrean uses this to her advantage by illustrating the human foibles of such heroes. In any case, Odysseus's renowned cunning is at the forefront of his personality, what with his plan to avoid the Cyclops and the secret infiltration of his own house at the book's conclusion - he is even given several moments of self-inspiration that were originally passed onto him from the gods; such as chewing the moly flower to avert Circe's spells. Customs such as the emphasis on hospitality and various death rites are interwoven into the story's flow (their importance clear without the need to stop and explain them) as is Odysseus's opposing feelings of both wanderlust and weariness. Like all the retellings (collected together in an omnibus edition: *Æ Greek Heroes*), this series can serve as either an introduction to or a deeper look at the heroes of antiquity. "Odysseus" is perhaps not as memorable as her other retellings,

simply because it is a straightforward adaptation of with little in the way of personal innovation, but still, this is a comprehensive, researched, well-told version of what is arguably one of the most famous stories of Ancient Greece.

Odysseus: A Retelling of the Odyssey Cricket books 2005 148 pp 8.50\$ Geraldine McCaughrean ISBN 0-8126-2721-0As one wave arrived, another was always drawing back again out to sea, out to the open sea that is always traveling, always traveling. Page 148The Odyssey is the second part to Homer's classical Iliad and Odyssey. Ithaca's honorable king, Odysseus has started his voyage home from the ten-year siege of Troy. Everything goes wrong when a storm carries his fleet off course into a flood of dangers and enemies. Problems plague Odysseus and his men, from giants to mutiny, the most dangerous of which is the wrath of the sun and sea gods. Worse still, suitors are swarming into Ithaca to seek the hand of Odysseus' lovely queen, Penelope. Will Odysseus make it home in time or will he be replaced as Ithaca's king?Odysseus loves his family, Penelope his wife and his son Telemachus and The Odyssey describes his ten year voyage to get home to them. Odysseus left home when Telemachus was only a baby but Telemachus knows a tremendous amount about his father from heroic tales and descriptions from his mother. Penelope is the radiant queen of Ithaca. She misses Odysseus more every passing moment. Despite constant propaganda by her suitors Penelope continues to believe that her husband is still drawing breath.I think that the story of the Odyssey is one of the most incredible pieces of literature in history. Odysseus is the second version of the Odyssey I have read. I enjoyed that it was more detailed in some areas than the first version I read, however, I felt that some parts of the story could have been more descriptive. For example, when Ido the sea nymph rescues Odysseus, Geraldine McCaughrean more fully describes why the nymph rescues Odysseus, which makes the story more interesting. At another point, when Odysseus tricks Circe into transforming his men from pigs back into men, I thought the author could have provided much more detail to this very intriguing part of the story. The book focuses on ethics and courtesy and more so the lack there of. Examples of the lack of courtesy include the Cyclops eating Odysseus' men and also when Circe transformed Odysseus' men into pigs. The giants and the Cyclops are incredibly despicable with a blatant disregard for any common courtesy. The kings in this story, however, are much more kind and helpful. One king gives Odysseus the bag of winds, a magical bag containing the wind currants of the world; the other king gives him a ship and protection from the furious Poseidon. With this help Odysseus finally returns home. This is a fantastic book that is perfect for fans of adventure and fantasy between the ages of nine and fourteen that are looking for a quick read. I would recommend this book to anyone who

enjoys mythology.Sam Sklar

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