



The Odyssey of Homer (100 Greatest Books Ever Written Series)

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The Odyssey is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer. It is, in part, a sequel to the Iliad, the other work traditionally ascribed to Homer. The poem is fundamental to the modern Western canon. Indeed it is the second—the Iliad being the first—extant work of Western literature. It was probably composed near the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in Ionia, the Greek-speaking coastal region of what is now Turkey.

The poem mainly centers on the Greek hero Odysseus and his long journey home following the fall of Troy. It takes Odysseus ten years to reach Ithaca after the ten-year Trojan War. In his absence, it is assumed he has died, and his wife Penelope and son Telemachus must deal with a group of unruly suitors competing for Penelope's hand in marriage.

It continues to be read in the Homeric Greek and translated into modern languages around the world. Among the most impressive elements of the text are its non-linear plot, and that events seem to depend as much on the choices made by women and serfs as on the actions of fighting men. In the English language as well as many others, the word odyssey has come to refer to an epic voyage.

Alexander Pope was an eighteenth-century English poet, best known for his satirical verse and for his translation of Homer. He is the third most frequently quoted writer in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, after Shakespeare and Tennyson. Pope's translation of the Odyssey appeared in 1726, but confronted with the arduousness of the task, he enlisted the help of William Broome and Elijah Fenton. Pope attempted to conceal the extent of the collaboration (he himself translated only twelve books, Broome eight and Fenton four), but the secret leaked out.

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