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# The Odyssey (English prose)

*Homer*

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# The Odyssey (English prose)

*Homer*

**The Odyssey (English prose)** Homer
The Odyssey of Homer: done into English prose by S.H. Butcher & A. Lang

The Odyssey

- 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 ascribed to Homer. The poem is fundamental to the modern Western canon, and is the second oldest extant work of Western literature, the Iliad being the oldest. Scholars believe it was composed near the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in Ionia, the Greek coastal region of Anatolia.

The poem mainly focuses on the Greek hero Odysseus (known as Ulysses in Roman myths) and his journey home after 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, the Mnesteres or Proci, who compete for Penelope's hand in marriage.

It continues to be read in the Homeric Greek and translated into modern languages around the world. Many scholars believe that the original poem was composed in an oral tradition by an aoidos (epic poet/singer), perhaps a rhapsode (professional performer), and was more likely intended to be heard than read. The details of the ancient oral performance, and the story's conversion to a written work inspire continual debate among scholars. The Odyssey was written in a poetic dialect of Greek—a literary amalgam of Aeolic Greek, Ionic Greek, and other Ancient Greek dialects—and comprises 12,110 lines of dactylic hexameter. Among the most noteworthy elements of the text are its non-linear plot, and the influence on events of choices made by women and serfs, besides 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.

The Odyssey has a lost sequel, the Telegony, which was not written by Homer. It was usually attributed in antiquity to Cinaethon of Sparta. In one source, the Telegony was said to have been stolen from Musaeus by Eugamon or Eugammon of Cyrene (see Cyclic poets).

Homer

- Homer is best known as the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. He was believed by the ancient Greeks to have been the first and greatest of the epic poets. Author of the first known literature of Europe, he is central to the Western canon.

When he lived, as well as whether he lived at all, is unknown. Herodotus estimates that Homer lived no more than 400 years before his own time, which would place him at around 850 BCE or later. Pseudo-Herodotus estimates that he was born 622 years before Xerxes I placed a pontoon bridge over the Hellespont in 480 BCE, which would place him at 1102 BCE, 168 years after the fall of Troy in 1270 BCE. These two end points are 252 years apart, representative of the differences in dates given by the other sources.

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