

dear parents,

At Monkey Presents we have a dream. We want to create entertaining and engaging media products that are fun, funny, lyrical, educational, informative and, above all, products that recognize the intelligence and potential of all children. Is it an impossible dream? We hope not.

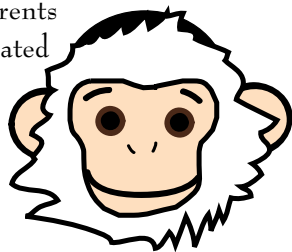
Why the classics? Well, We think that the classics are not classics by accident but enjoy their status because they provide something timeless and universal that every generation can recognize and appreciate. And, although many of the classics often deal with decidedly adult issues and themes, at the core of these issues and themes are universal stories and ideas that speak to all ages. Ideas and stories that illustrate and celebrate what life is about and what life can be.

The real hope we have here at Monkey Presents is that our products are able to present these ideas and stories in such a way as to provide children and their parents with a common familiarity and starting point for the appreciation and, possibly, the discussion of the whole wide world of ideas that the whole wide world of literature provides.

This brings us to a quick and entirely optional “how to” section concerning the use of the DVD and the included monkey guide. Through our research, we are convinced that children, especially the younger children, are perfectly capable of creating a story

without the use of the narrator option. It may not be “The Story” but that’s what is so great about it. This approach is more likely to engage both you and your child in a discussion. Children have the opportunity to make connections and ask questions.

Through the same research we noticed that parents and other adults seemed to be decidedly frustrated with the lack of clarity that the non-narrated version provides and understand the simple desire of being able to answer the questions that may and, in fact, hopefully arise.



As a result we have provided two, non-exclusive options in order to look smart or, at least, not feel dumb. The first and easiest is to employ the narrator option which offers a simple and kid-friendly description or “narration” of the story while the DVD plays. The second option is to peruse the provided Monkey Guide (also available on the DVD special features menu). The guide is a very concise but accurate description of the original work and includes a short biography of the author. The guide also attempts to explain the differences between the original and Monkey’s stage version. Ideally and, time permitting, discussion and parent-child interaction will ensue.

We hold a simple belief in the incredible capacity of children to learn what they are taught. We believe education can and should be enjoyable, interactive and filled with humor and laughter. We hope that it can be even more and provide the familiarity that often leads to the fuller enjoyment and appreciation of not only literature and the arts but life itself.

Here's to dreams.

According to Greek tradition, Homer was a blind man that lived somewhere in Ionia (south western Asia Minor, now Turkey) sometime between the sixth and eighth centuries B.C. It was believed that Homer was responsible for the creation of the two great epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey which together tell part of the story of the Trojan war and Odysseus' journey home after the fall of Troy. The ancient Greeks believed that Homer had actually composed ten such epic poems of which only the Iliad and the Odyssey remain.

It is generally believed that Homer combined several shorter stories and poems that had been passed down by different storytellers for generations into the two great epics then, later on, dictated the stories to a scribe who wrote them down. There is, however, quite a lot of debate on whether any of this is true.

After years and years of research, scholars have been unable to prove that Homer actually existed. Apparently he did not have a birth certificate, social security number or even a driver's license. Some scholars have suggested that the Iliad and Odyssey are the products of many different poets while some have suggested that Homer was actually a woman. Some have even claimed that the Iliad and the Odyssey were not created by Homer but by a different man with the same name.

It gets a little silly. The ancient Greeks had no problem believing that Homer existed and was responsible for the creation of both the Iliad and the Odyssey. This may be because they didn't have birth certificates, social security numbers or driver's licenses either. Since it is impossible to prove whether Homer existed or not, it seems smart to stick with the Greeks and the original story.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Schliemann, a wealthy German entrepreneur and amateur archeologist, discovered and excavated an ancient city that very likely was Troy. Since then, more and more evidence suggests that the subjects of the poems themselves, the Trojan war and Odysseus' journey home, long thought to be pure fantasy, do seem to be based on actual events that occurred two to four hundred years before Homer was born if, in fact, he ever was.

Fortunately, for us, there is no doubt that the poems are real and a trip to your local library will reveal Homer's ability to tell a good story whoever he, she, or they were.



Monkey begins

his version of Homer's *Odyssey* with the famous Trojan Horse story. After nearly ten years of fighting between the Trojan and Greek warriors, the war seems like it will go on forever until Odysseus, inspired by Athena, the goddess of wisdom often depicted as an owl (hint, hint) devises a plan involving a great big hollow wooden horse. The Greeks pretend to give up and leave behind the horse as a parting gift. Of course, hiding in the horse are dozens of Greek warriors, including Odysseus who wait for the Trojans to pull the horse inside their city and promptly fall asleep. The Greeks sneak out, open the city gates and the next thing you know, no more Troy.

This story has given rise to the common expression, "beware of Greeks bearing gifts" but someone once pointed out that it would be more accurate and practical to "beware of gifts bearing Greeks."



So, back to Troy, the Greeks finally win after ten years of fighting, Odysseus loads up his ships with the spoils of war and sets sail for home. Unfortunately for him, the trip home, which should take a few days, is going to take about ten more years. Odysseus' first stop is normal enough. He and his crew make a stop to steal some sheep. According to the poem, this is a fairly routine way of doing business at the time. They make the mistake, however, of overstaying their welcome and the locals have time to organize and attack his crew. Odysseus escapes but not without losing some of his crew and newly purloined sheep.



the next stop

- leaves normal far behind. This is the famous
- island of the Lotus Eaters. The inhabitants of this
- island do nothing but eat Lotus fruit all day long,
- which seem to make you very sleepy and happy.
- Odysseus has a heck of a time convincing the men
- who eat the fruit to leave but eventually succeeds.
- Monkey has substituted chocolate chip cookies
- for the Lotus fruit because everyone knows that
- chocolate chip cookies can be pretty addictive too.



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till short on supplies, Odysseus and his men's next unfortunate choice of islands to stop at happens to be inhabited by a bunch of giants with

one eye in the middle of their forehead known as Cyclops. These guys are not very nice. Odysseus and his crew find this out the hard way when they try to help themselves to some cheese and a few more sheep. A Cyclops named Polyphemos catches them in the act and, blocking the entrance to the cave with a big boulder, he keeps them captive until Odysseus comes up with a plan to blind the Cyclops and sneak out of the cave. Odysseus makes another big mistake when he can't resist teasing the Cyclops as he sails away and shouts out his own name to let the Cyclops know who's the boss. Bad idea. The Cyclops knows people in deep places, namely his father, Poseidon god of the sea. And, since this is the same sea that Odysseus has to sail across in order to get home to Ithaca, this will prove to be a costly boast.





in spite of this,

Odysseus and his crew almost make it back home to Ithaca when they next land on the island of Aiolos. As luck would have it, King Aiolos (played by a Lion with a crown in the monkey's show) happens to control the four winds and, after giving Odysseus and his men food and other supplies for their voyage, he generously gives Odysseus a sack that has three of the four winds tied up inside. The remaining fourth wind will blow Odysseus and his ships straight home in no time.

It almost works.

- Odysseus stays awake for nine days until he
- can see the shores of Ithaca and then, unwisely,
- falls asleep. His men, unaware of the actual
- contents of the bag, begin to suspect that it is
- filled with treasure of some sort that Odysseus
- will not share. They talk themselves into open-
- ing the bag to see what is inside while Odysseus
- is asleep and poof! the winds escape and none
- of them will ever see home again. The winds
- blow the ship all the way back to the island of
- King Aiolos but he refuses to help them this time,
- understandably disappointed with their behavior.



Things get worse.

Odysseus and his crew try to row their ships back home but don't make it very far before they are exhausted. They stop at one island only to lose most of their ships and companions when the locals throw huge rocks (giant carrots in monkey's version) down at them from the cliffs near the water. Odysseus barely escapes with his one remaining ship and much smaller crew.



★
circe
↓



The next island they end up on belongs to a witch named Circe.

Circe turns about half of Odysseus' men into pigs.

Odysseus goes to their rescue and

is met by Hermes, the wing-footed messenger of the gods, who tells Odysseus how to defeat Circe's spell using a magic flower. (monkey takes a few liberties here and has Odysseus essentially rescue himself by simply expressing his dissatisfaction at having been changed from a Bear into a Bunny)



Once Circe's spell is broken,

she agrees to help Odysseus and tells him what he must do in order to return safely home. She tells him that he must sail west until he reaches the land of the dead at the end of the world and talk to a few ghosts who will give him more information. The ghosts and Circe warn him about the Sirens and how to avoid their trap as well as the whirlpool Charybdis, the giant sea snake Scylla and, last but not least, the island of Helios and his holy cows.



The cows belong
to the sun-god,
Helios.



So, Odysseus and his men are warned not to touch the cows or else Helios will get very, very angry. Well, as luck or fate would have it, bad weather keeps them stuck on the island until they run out of food, get very hungry and... oops. Helios gets very, very angry and threatens to take the sun away unless Zeus punishes Odysseus and his men. Zeus whips up a storm and as Odysseus and his men are sailing away from the scene of the crime, he zaps their ship with a lightning bolt and it sinks. Only Odysseus makes it. He manages to hold onto a piece of the ship's mast and floats to a new island, this one belonging to a certain sea nymph named Calypso.

note: if you think that Apollo is the Greek god of the sun you are right. If you remember this story involving Odysseus and Apollo's sacred cows, your memory is probably fine. There seems to be a bit of confusion between the two Greek gods of the sun for some reason.



- on her island for several years until finally, at Athena's urging, the gods relent and send Hermes to tell Calypso that she has to let Odysseus go. Odysseus builds a raft and sets sail but Poseidon, still angry after all these years, isn't going to let him off so easy and whips up another storm. Odysseus' raft falls apart and he is forced to swim for it. He makes it to yet another strange shore and falls asleep, exhausted.

He wakes up on the island of King Alkinoos. Here, Odysseus tells his story to the king and his court.

(Alkinoos is also played by the same Lion with a crown that played King Aiolos. While it's true that monkey works on a very limited budget, he also felt that the two characters are so similar in their underlying narrative function as to warrant the repeated use of the same actor and costume in both parts).

The king is so impressed with his story he gives Odysseus a boatload of treasure and a boat to take him and his treasure home.



And the very next day.



Odysseus
is home on Ithaca
for the first time in nearly
twenty years. Luckily, Athena
shows up and warns him that his

- house is overrun with dozens of
- young men eating and drinking his
- food and wine and trying to marry
his wife. Odysseus
disguises himself
as an old
beggar and
sneaks into
his own
house.

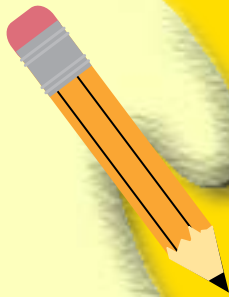




The young men are very rude and mean to Odysseus. His wife, Penelope, begins to suspect that this old beggar just might be her long lost husband and suggests a test, she knows, only her husband can pass. In Homer's version it involves shooting an arrow through twelve hoops in a row using Odysseus' old hunting bow. None of the young suitors can even manage to string the bow (monkey substitutes a croquet match with an apparently, very heavy croquet mallet). Odysseus passes the test and defeats the young suitors with ease. He is reunited with his wife and family and his kingdom is restored.



The End



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MONKEY GUIDE™
Ages 6 months and up
Manufactured in USA
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