

Odysseus and the Cyclops (Greek, from *The Odyssey*, by Homer) Hero Story



After 10 years of fighting against Troy, Odysseus, one of the victorious Greek leaders known for his cleverness, sailed for home with his men and ships. After many adventures, they came to an island. Unbeknownst to them, the island was inhabited by the Cyclops people, a race of giants with only one eye in the middle of their forehead. The Cyclops creatures were lawless, without culture, and ate humans when available.

On finding a large cave, Odysseus and his men entered the cave, where they helped themselves to the food and drink they found there, and fell asleep. After a time, a Cyclops, whose name was Polyphemus, returned to the cave. Leading his flock of giant sheep into the cave, he rolled a huge stone against the mouth of the cave to close the entrance. On finding

Odysseus and his men in the cave, the Cyclops became enraged, grabbed two of the men, smashed their heads against the rocks, ate them, and fell asleep. Odysseus dared do nothing to the Cyclops, since only the Cyclops was strong enough to move the stone away from the mouth of the cave.

The next morning, the Cyclops grabbed two more men, smashed their heads against the rocks, and ate them for his breakfast. He then rolled away the stone, led out his herd of sheep, and rolled the stone back to close the cave. Odysseus devised a plan. He and his men took a large timber, carved the end to a sharp point, and hid it.

When the Cyclops returned in the evening, he again led his sheep in, rolled the stone to close the mouth of the cave, and proceeded to bash in the heads of two more men and eat them. This time Odysseus spoke up, and offered the Cyclops some strong wine he had brought with him. Polyphemus, who had never drunk wine before, drank his fill and became very drunk. Thanking Odysseus, Polyphemus asked him his name. Odysseus told him his name was "No man". The Cyclops then fell fast asleep in a drunken sleep.

Odysseus and his men then took the timber and heated the sharpened end in the fire until it glowed red. Then, with all their strength, they pushed the red-hot point into the eye of Polyphemus. The Cyclops howled and woke up flailing, but he was now blind. The other Cyclops who lived on the island came running, but when they asked Polyphemus who had done this to him, he replied "No man!" and the other Cyclops all returned home laughing.

Early the next morning, Odysseus tied each of his men to the belly of one of the giant sheep. When Polyphemus awoke and led the sheep out of the cave, he felt the back of each sheep to make sure no one was on them. Feeling nothing, Polyphemus allowed each sheep to pass out of the cave, carrying with it one of Odysseus' crew tied to its belly. Odysseus himself grabbed onto the fleece of the last sheep's belly, and escaped through the mouth of the cave.

Odysseus and his men ran back to their ship and hurriedly pushed out to sea. As they sailed away from the harbor, Odysseus called out to Polyphemus, laughing at him and telling him that it was not "No Man", but he, Odysseus, who had blinded him and fooled him.

Source: **Pratt Institute, Prof. Michael O'Rourke**
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