

Name _____



Strengths and Struggles

Odysseus, the brave king of Ithaca, had fought for ten long years in the Trojan War. Now, he just wanted to go home to his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus. But the journey back would take another ten years, full of challenges. His strengths and weaknesses would shape every step of his adventure.

One of Odysseus's greatest strengths was his intelligence. He did not just rely on his muscles—he used his mind. When he and his men were trapped in the

cave of Polyphemus, a one-eyed giant, Odysseus came up with a clever plan. He told the giant his name was "Nobody." Then, he and his men blinded the monster while he was asleep and escaped by clinging to the undersides of sheep. When Polyphemus cried out for help, he shouted that "Nobody" had hurt him, so no other giants came to help. Thanks to Odysseus's cleverness, they made it out alive.

But Odysseus also had weaknesses, and they often caused problems. His biggest flaw was his pride. After escaping Polyphemus, he could not resist boasting about his real name. This was a mistake. The Cyclops was the son of Poseidon, the powerful god of the sea. Enraged, Poseidon cursed Odysseus, making his journey home even more dangerous.

Odysseus's determination was another strength that kept him going. He faced storms, monsters, and even the underworld, yet he never gave up. He resisted the song of the Sirens, sailed through the deadly waters of Scylla and Charybdis, and outwitted the sorceress Circe, who had turned his men into pigs. Each time he was tested, he used his bravery and intelligence to survive.

However, Odysseus's weaknesses delayed his journey. At one point, his men opened a bag of winds that had been given to them to help their travels, thinking it contained treasure. The winds blew them far away from home. At another moment, his curiosity led him to stay too long in dangerous places, like when he visited the land of the Lotus-Eaters.

In the end, it was a mix of his strengths and weaknesses that shaped his journey. After twenty years, he finally reached Ithaca. He had changed—he was wiser and humbler—but he was still the clever and courageous hero who had fought to return home.