

The Odyssey
By Homer
Written 800 B.C.E
Translated by Samuel Butler

Tell me, O muse, of that ingenious hero who traveled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatsoever source you may know them.

So now all who escaped death in battle or by shipwreck had got safely home except Ulysses, and he, though he was longing to return to his wife and country, was detained by the goddess Calypso, who had got him into a large cave and wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when the gods settled that he should go back to Ithaca; even then, however, when he was among his own people, his troubles were not yet over; nevertheless all the gods had now begun to pity him except Neptune, who still persecuted him without ceasing and would not let him get home.

The Odyssey
Translated by George Chapman

O Muse, inform, that many a way
Wound with his wisdom to his wished stay;
That wandered wondrous far, when he the town
Of sacred Troy had sack'd and shivered down;
The cities of a world of nations, 5
With all their manners, minds, and fashions,
He saw and knew; at sea felt many woes,
Much care sustained, to save from overthrows
Himself and friends in their retreat for home;
But so their fates he could not overcome, 10
Though much he thirsted it. O men unwise,
They perish'd by their own impieties,
That in their hunger's rapine would not shun
The oxen of the lofty-going Sun,
Who therefore from their eyes the day bereft 15
Of safe return. These acts, in some part left,
Tell us, as others, deified Seed of Jove.
Now all the rest that austere death outstrove
At Troy's long siege at home safe anchor'd are,
Free from the malice both of sea and war; 20
Only Ulysses is denied access
To wife and home. The grace of Goddesses,
The reverend nymph Calypso, did detain
Him in her caves, past all the race of men
Enflam'd to make him her lov'd lord and spouse. 25
And when the Gods had destin'd that his house,
Which Ithaca on her rough bosom bears,
(The point of time wrought out by ambient years)
Should be his haven, Contention still extends
Her envy to him, even amongst his friends. 30
All Gods took pity on him; only [he](#),
That girds earth in the cincture of the sea,
Divine Ulysses ever did envy,
And made the fix'd port of his birth to fly.

The Nine Muses

The Nine Muses were Greek goddesses who ruled over the arts and sciences and offered inspiration in those subjects. They were the daughters of Zeus, lord of all gods, and Mnemosyne, who represented memory. Memory was important for the Muses because in ancient times, when there were no books, poets had to carry their work in their memories.

Calliope was the muse of epic poetry.

Clio was the muse of history.

Erato was the muse of love poetry.

Euterpe was the muse of music.

Melpomene was the muse of tragedy.

Polyhymnia was the muse of sacred poetry.

Terpsichore was the muse of dance.

Thalia was the muse of comedy.

Urania was the muse of astronomy.

An Epic Poem...

- Is an extended narrative (story)
- Arose from the oral tradition of storytelling.
- Retells in a continuous narrative the life and works of a heroic or mythological person or group.
- It is written in verse (poetry), although may be subsequently translated into prose.
- The term "epic" has been recycled to refer to prose works, films, and similar works which are characterized by great length, multiple settings, large numbers of characters, or long span of time involved. As a result of this change in the use of the word, many prose works of the past may be called "epics" which were not composed or originally understood as such.