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# Build the Trojan Horse

## In Media Res

*The Odyssey* begins “in media res,” or “in the middle of things,” and therefore, in order to understand *The Odyssey*, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of *The Iliad*. *The Iliad* was another epic poem about the Trojan War that Homer composed prior to writing *The Odyssey*. Many events that occur in *The Odyssey* are a direct result of events that happened during the Trojan War. The following is a very short synopsis of the Trojan War, and the events that influenced the second epic poem from Homer, *The Odyssey*.

Prince Paris was a young man who faced a challenge. He was asked to judge who the most beautiful woman in the world was, and he was given three women from whom to choose: Aphrodite, the goddess of love; Hera, wife of Zeus; and Athena, goddess of wisdom and war.

Each woman offered Prince Paris a bribe if he would choose her, but Aphrodite offered him the greatest prize: Helen of Troy, the most beautiful mortal woman in the world. So Prince Paris selected Aphrodite as the winner and claimed his prize by abducting Helen of Troy. The problem was that Helen of Troy was already married to King Menelaus. King Menelaus, determined to reclaim his wife, gathered his army and went after Prince Paris and Helen. These are the events that began the Trojan War.

Odysseus did not want to join in the battle but was finally persuaded. Reluctantly, he left his wife and newborn son to sail to Troy and fight in the Trojan War.

After ten years of war, Odysseus decided that they would tear down their ships to build a great wooden horse. The Trojans would then believe they had left and would accept the horse as a gift. Just as Odysseus predicted, the Trojans believed that the Greeks were offering them a gift and admitting defeat. So, they took the huge wooden horse into the city gates. When the city of Troy fell asleep after a long night of celebrating their victory, Greek warriors climbed out of the huge wooden horse and attacked them.

This incident symbolizes Odysseus’s intellect and ability to command. Odysseus is not only strong of body, he is strong of mind, and this is what makes him a valuable person. Odysseus commanded his men justly and fairly, and most importantly wisely. He is admired for this quality, and this is why his men are willing to follow him even to the depths of Hades in the epic journey of *The Odyssey*.



# Build the Trojan Horse (cont.)

Odysseus created the monster Trojan horse in order to hide from his enemies and catch them by surprise. He and his crew ripped apart their ships, then spent many days building the huge wooden horse. They climbed into the belly of the wooden animal and waited until the Trojans wheeled them into the city of Troy. After a long night of drinking and eating, the Trojans passed out on the dirt floors. The Greeks, led by Odysseus, then climbed out of the wooden horse and killed all of the people in their sleep. This is the event that ends *The Iliad*, and it leads us to the beginning of *The Odyssey*.

Now is your chance to create a model of the Trojan horse that Odysseus built from his ship. You will need the following materials:

- butcher paper
- pencils
- rulers

1. Decide on the size of the horse that you would like to build. You will need to decide on a measurement that represents the larger size. For instance, 1" = 1'. In this way, you will be able to build your horse to scale.
2. Create a layout on a piece of paper, depicting what the finished product will look like. You will draw out the basic design (not to scale) so that you have a model to follow.
3. Complete measurements of the legs, body, and head. Remember that the base of the horse will need to be sturdy enough to hold the men who will be inside, and will also need to support the entire structure. Research what size you will need your finished horse to be. A math teacher or shop teacher can help you in this area.
4. A good plan is to place wheels on the bottom of the horse or to build it on a sled of some kind. The Trojans will need to be able to move the large beast into the city.
5. Remember to include a way into and out of the body of the horse. The men need to be able to access it.
6. Now you may begin your actual "plan." Check all of your measurements, and make sure that your picture includes each measurement. An example follows on the next page.
7. Remember that this is a group project. Cooperate with your fellow students on the design of your Trojan horse.
8. When the horse design is complete, display it with pride! You may wish to build the actual horse using the plans that you have created.

