

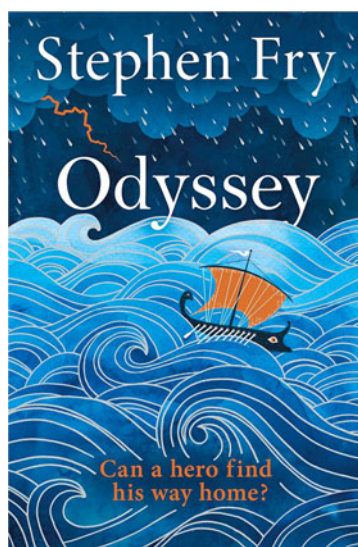
Book Review

Odyssey

Fry (S.) Pp. xx + 409, maps, colour pls. London: Penguin Michael Joseph, 2024. Cased, £25. ISBN: 978-0-241-48635-1. <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/320993/odyssey-by-fry-stephen/> 9780241486351 Thanked: J. Taylor, L. Moore, A. Goff, K. Shepherd, J. Crocker

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Odyssey is the fourth instalment in the series which also includes *Mythos*, *Heroes*, and *Troy*. This series is a retelling of the Greek myths with the unique wit, clever humour, insight, and enjoyable prose of the noted English actor, comedian, and writer Stephen Fry. Had I not read the previous three instalments in the series, I might have asked myself why *Odyssey* required a contemporary retelling when one could easily read any

of the many wonderful translations that are readily available. When one begins to read the books in this series, one starts to appreciate Stephen Fry as an insightful and trusted tour guide offering understanding and perspective. Certainly one could opt to read the original, but here one is offered the opportunity to view the original through the eyes of Stephen Fry, who provides the reader with a fun and enjoyable time as he accompanies us while we accompany Odysseus on his 10-year-long journey home from the defeated city of Troy to the lovely Penelope on the island of Ithaca.

Fry is loyal to the original while also being thoroughly modern in his retelling. He offers the reader a readable and enjoyable text infused with his typical wit and enjoyable prose. He brings the epic to life through his own evident passion and enthusiasm for the world of Odysseus. His passion and enthusiasm are infectious and leave the reader wanting more. Yet the success of this work cannot be reduced to Fry's enthusiasm and style, because he succeeds in offering valuable commentary and contextualisation while balancing humour with the solemnity due to an epic of this stature.

Odysseus has made some notable divine enemies through his tactics which brought about the defeat of Troy. Thus, when he and his comrades disembark from the defeated city to head home to Ithaca, he encounters storms, cyclopes, sirens, witches, gods, and other creatures, all while Penelope is stuck at home raising their son alone. If only Poseidon and Odysseus' men could have been trusted to bring Odysseus safely home in a more direct way, particularly without a 7-year stay with Calypso on Ogygia, then Fry would have been left with a much more abbreviated story to share with us, his contemporary audience. Fry succeeds in simplifying the complex plot of the *Odyssey* without missing any of the key events of the original. While I thoroughly enjoyed reading the hard copy version of the book, I must admit that there is something even more enjoyable about the audiobook version as narrated by Stephen Fry himself. *Odyssey*, whether in its book or audiobook form, is highly laudable in its ability to bring the ancient epic to life for our contemporary world while also remaining highly faithful to the original plot.

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