

Teacher's Guide for *Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog*

Argos: The Story of Odysseus as Told by His Loyal Dog is a re-telling of the *Odyssey* from the viewpoint of Odysseus's loyal dog. Mentioned for only a few lines in most translations, I have taken what little Homer tells us about Argos and invented a life for him on the island of Ithaca while he waits for his master to return, guarding the flocks from wolves, as well as Odysseus's wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachos, from the evil suitors. Knowing his master is in peril, Argos seeks the help of a number of animals including seagulls, bats, sea turtles, crows, and sparrows to intercede on his master's behalf, and through their stories Argos learns of his master's many challenges and adventures.

The novel *Argos* gives middle-grade teachers the opportunity to discuss the world of Greek mythology, heroic quests, geography, and the history of the Bronze Age, as well as literary topics such as protagonist/antagonist, point of view, setting, characterization, personification, and many more. The following study guide is designed to generate ideas and topics for class discussion, close reading and story analysis, as well as encourage creative writing projects for budding writers. For each topic I have tried to pose questions of easy, moderate, and more challenging content suitable for readers of different strengths. Please feel free to contact me with suggestions and ideas that I can include in future iterations of the study guide.

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Subject Areas: Language Arts, Mythology, History, Geography, Creative Writing

Greek and General Mythology Topics

- List the Greek gods mentioned in *Argos*
- What are the human traits and roles associated with the Greek gods mentioned in *Argos*?
- Why do mythological gods possess human traits such as vanity, greed, courage, and wisdom?
- What is the difference between a myth, a legend, and a folktale?
- Investigate the role that the "Apple of Discord" played in leading to the events that triggered the Trojan War.
- List mythologies from additional cultures and civilizations. What are their similarities and differences?
- Research topic: What we view as myths now were often fiercely held religious beliefs. What factors drive the change from a religious belief to a myth?

Heroic Quests

- What is a quest?
- What is a hero? Describe their heroic attributes.

- What are the key elements of a heroic quest?
- What was Odysseus's quest?
- Discussion question: Should all quests be resolved or are the lessons learned during the journey more important? Can you give examples of successful and/or failed quests from literature, mythology, or history?

Language Arts

- What are the different settings for *Argos*?
- What point of view is *Argos* written in? Is this POV used for the entire novel?
- Who is the main protagonist in the novel? Who is the main antagonist?
- What are the themes, motifs, and other literary devices employed in *Argos*?
- How did the author distinguish the different languages and speech patterns for each of the animal characters?
- What conflicts must Argos wrestle with in the novel?
- What conflicts must Odysseus wrestle with in the novel?
- Plot Odysseus's journey home and make a timeline of his journey.

History

- Was the Trojan War an actual event?
- What are the origins of the Achaean (Greek) Empire?
- What was the Bronze Age? What ages preceded and followed it?
- What different civilizations contributed to the Mediterranean Bronze Age?
- Research topic: What contributions did the Greek empire leave us?

Geography

- What are the climate, flora, and fauna of the Mediterranean region?
- What flora and fauna appear in *Argos*?
- What are some of the human and natural wonders of the Mediterranean? What connections do we have to it today?
- List the smaller seas that are encompassed by the Mediterranean Sea.
- Research topic: How long do you think it would take to sail to various points along the Mediterranean Sea using ships from the Bronze Age? Contrast these times to modern ferries that sail there now.

Creative Writing

- Take two minor characters from *Argos* and write a scene between them. Create some sort of conflict that drives the dialogue.
- Think of another epic story and imagine how you would retell it from the viewpoint of a minor character.
- Write a scene from this new re-imagining.