The story

This is an ancient Greek myth. Odysseus is the King of Ithaca, in Ancient Greece. The Greeks have defeated the people of Troy in a war. Odysseus is returning home and faces many challenges on the way. Odysseus and his men stop at an island where the Lotus Eaters live. These creatures like to cook a dish made of lotus flowers, which makes those who eat it forget their past life and long to stay with the Lotus Eaters. Some of Odysseus's crew fall under the spell of the Lotus Eaters and he has to tie them up and drag them back to the ship. They set sail again, and reach another island where they find a huge cave filled with sheep and vast piles of food. A massive creature called Cyclops, with one eye in the middle of his forehead, lives in the cave. He imprisons the men in his cave but they eventually manage to escape.

Next they reach a floating island where King Aeolus lives. When Odysseus is ready to leave, he kindly traps the winds in a leather bottle to stop them from harming Odysseus's ship. But the crew, curious to know what is in it, open the bottle when Odysseus is asleep. The strong winds blow the ship back to the island, where Aeolus refuses to help them again and sends them away. After this, they reach an island inhabited by man-eating giants, from which they flee.

In Odysseus's long absence, his noblemen who have been left behind in Ithica, try to persuade Penelope, his wife, that he is dead and that she should marry one of them. Penelope puts them off by saying that she will make a decision when she has finished the tapestry she is weaving—but every night she unravels some of her work so that the task is never-ending.

Exploring the next island, Odysseus and his men come across a house surrounded by tame lions and wolves. The beautiful woman who lives here gives some of the men a strange drink, which turns them into goats! Odysseus rescues them by making her turn the goats back into men.

Next they pass the island of the Sirens, creatures with the heads of women and the bodies of birds. Odysseus knows that anyone who hears their song cannot resist: it makes them sail towards it, onto the rocks to their death. He makes the crew put beeswax in their ears, and orders them to tie him to the mast. In this way they sail safely past. The ship then sails into a terrible storm, and the men narrowly escape some fearsome sea monsters.

They run into another bad storm. The ship sinks and all its crew is lost. Odysseus escapes by making a raft. Ten days later he drifts ashore on an island. He is discovered by a beautiful girl called Calypso, who takes him home to her parents. They make him a small boat and he continues on his journey home.

Yet again, he hits a storm, his boat is wrecked and he swims ashore on another island. The king of the island sends him on one of his ships, crewed by his men, on the last part of his journey back to Ithica. Odysseus sleeps throughout the journey and is still asleep when the crew puts him ashore. He discovers what has been happening in his absence. His son, Telemachus, has been very worried, and is pleased when the old man reveals his true identity. They make a plan.
Introducing the book

The cover

Hold up the cover. Read the book’s title to and with the class. Explain that Odysseus is a person’s name.

Talk about the picture. Ask Is the story set in the present? How can you tell it happened at some time in the past? Where do you think it takes place?

Ask What do you think the story is going to be about?

The title page

Ask the children to turn to the title page. Explain that the story is a legend (an old story about imaginary people and events in the past) and that there are many Greek legends, most of which are exciting and full of adventure. Ask Has anyone visited Greece? What do you know about it? (If possible, locate it on a map.) Explain that the story has been adapted (made simpler).

Hold up your own book and point to the man in the centre of the picture. Ask What do you notice about the way Odysseus is dressed? (He’s wearing a tunic, a cloak, sandals, a metal headband and leather wrist guards.) Do you think he lives in a cold or a hot climate? Why? Draw attention to the rest of the picture. Ask What do you think is the main setting for the story? (the sea).

Not knowing what he will find at his palace, Odysseus disguises himself as a ragged beggar and joins the feast that night. After the feast, he and Telemachus remove all the noblemen’s weapons while they sleep. Penelope tells the lazy ‘guests’ that she will marry the man who can shoot an arrow from the bow that Odysseus has left behind. The noblemen hold a shooting contest to determine which of them will marry Penelope. None succeeds in firing an arrow accurately from Odysseus’s bow. Then the ‘beggar’ steps forward – and fires a perfect shot. The noblemen realise who he really is and try to attack him – but they find that their weapons have disappeared. They run away as fast as they can. Odysseus reveals himself to Penelope, and all ends well.
Look at each part of the picture in turn and talk about it, starting with the whirlpool and continuing in a clockwise direction. Ask What is a whirlpool? What is happening to the ship? Does the ship have an engine? (No, it has a single sail and oars). What does the monster look like? How many eyes does it have? How big do you think it is? What do you think Odysseus is going to do to the monster? What is the flower like? Why do you think it might be important in the story? How many heads does the snake have? Would you like to come face-to-face with this snake? What do you think is escaping from the bottle to the left of Odysseus? What do you notice about the women on the cliff? (They have the bodies of birds.) Do you think these creatures have any special powers?

Point out that at the end of the book there is a poem (on page 58) and some facts about The Ancient Greeks (beginning on page 60) and Greece today (beginning on page 62).

Draw attention to the border pictures. Discuss and name each of the weapons illustrated.

Ask questions about each chapter title to stimulate the children’s interest, for example:

Chapter 1: Why do you think people eat lotus flowers?
Chapter 2: Show the title page again and point to the one-eyed monster. Ask Where does the monster live?
Chapter 3: Show the title page again and point to the bottle. Ask What do you think is coming out of the bottle?

Tell the children to do the related activity on page 1 of their Workbook.

Ask the children to look at page 3. Read the text to and with the class. It gives a brief background to help the children understand the story and its setting better. Point out where Greece is on the map. Ask the children to find Troy, where Odysseus begins his journey home, and Ithica, his ultimate destination. (As you read the story, locate any places mentioned on the map.) You can play the story on the audio cassette/CD at any time you choose.
Chapter 1

The Lotus Eaters

Pages 4 to 6

**Active vocabulary**

- **angry**
  - change the ‘a’ to ‘hu’ and make a new word

- **beach**
  - rhymes with *teach* and *peach*

- **cheer**
  - think of some other ‘ch’ words

- **forget**
  - a compound word: *for + get = forget*

- **friendly**
  - the ‘i’ is not pronounced – we pronounce the word as ‘friendly’

- **island**
  - remember that: *an island is land surrounded by water!*

- **sailor**
  - other ‘or’ words which indicate jobs are: *author, doctor, tailor*

- **straight**
  - other ‘str’ words include: *string, strong, strange, stretch, stream, street*

**Passive vocabulary**

- **sword**
  - the ‘w’ is a silent letter and is not pronounced

- **worried**
  - note how the spelling of the present tense *worry* is changed in the past tense

**Before reading**

- Pre-teach the active vocabulary (see the Teacher's Notes Introduction on page 13 and the Glossary). Use the notes in the table to discuss any interesting features of the words.

- Ask the children to do the activities on page 2 of their Workbook to practise the new vocabulary.

- Read the title of Chapter 1. Remind the children that a lotus is a type of flower. Ask *Who do you think the Lotus Eaters were? Why do you think people ate these flowers? Were the flowers magical?*

- Tell the children to look at the picture on pages 4 and 5. Ask *What does Odysseus look like? What is he wearing? Why do you think he is carrying a sword? What type of flowers do you think he has found? What are they like? How many ships are there in the sea? Why are the sails tied up? What can you see on the beach? What time of day do you think it is? Why? Is the sea calm or rough?*

- Tell the children to look at the picture on page 6. Ask *Why do you think Odysseus is pulling three men behind him? Why do you think he has tied them with a rope? How does Odysseus look? Is he happy? How do the three men look? Who do you think the three men are? Where do you think Odysseus is taking them? Where have they come from? What can you see behind them? What is the fire made of? Who do you think the people are who are sleeping around the fire?*
Optional suggestion: you may wish to give the children an appropriate amount of time, for example five minutes, to look quickly through the chapter to find (and perhaps underline) the active vocabulary they have been introduced to.

During reading
- Read the chapter expressively to the class (or play the audio cassette/CD). Do not stop to explain anything or to ask questions. Ensure the children are following in their books.
- Choose whichever of the following options is most appropriate for your class:
  - Read the chapter again and encourage the class to read it with you.
  - Read the chapter again, a paragraph at a time, and ask the class (or individuals) to read each paragraph aloud after you.
  - Do not read again yourself. Ask groups or individuals to read the chapter aloud, a paragraph at a time.
- Read (or play) the chapter again, marking text.
- Read (or play) the chapter again, marking text. Explain the meaning and pronunciation of the words listed as passive vocabulary, and any other unfamiliar words.
- Discuss how the pictures can help the reader guess the meaning of the text.

Stage 1 comprehension (literal)
Ask these questions orally, or set them as a written activity. You can also ask the children to do the activities on page 3 of their Workbook.
1. How many ships sailed away from Troy?
2. Where was Odysseus's home?
3. Why did the ships stop at the small island?
4. Did two or three men set off to look for water?
5. What did Odysseus take with him when he went to look for the three men?
6. What sort of flowers did Odysseus see?
7. Were the Lotus Eaters friendly or fierce?
8. What happened when you ate food made from lotus flowers?
9. The fire that Odysseus saw was orange – true or false?
10. How many Lotus Eaters were there near the fire?
11. Were they wide awake or sleepy?
12. What did Odysseus tell his three sailors to do?
13. Why didn’t the sailor remember who Odysseus was?
14. Was Odysseus angry or happy?
15. Where did Odysseus take the three sailors?

Ask the children to find examples of questions and exclamations in the chapter. Draw attention to their punctuation. Read each one aloud, and draw attention to how your tone of voice changes.

Ask the children to find and read aloud any words containing ‘ee’, ‘ea’, ‘oo’, or ‘ow’.

Finally, ask individuals to re-read short sections of the text aloud. Encourage them to read expressively and with appropriate intonation. (You might like to ask children to play the role of particular characters and read their parts.)
After reading

Stage 2 comprehension (extension)
Ask these questions orally, or set them as a written activity for the more able. Answers will vary. Encourage the children to give reasons for their suggestions, and accept any answer they can justify.

1. Do you think Odysseus was pleased to be going home? Why?
2. How can you tell his men were happy?
3. Why do you think Odysseus decided to stop at the small island for water?
4. Why did the sailors take down the sails from their ships?
5. How can you tell that it was late in the day?
6. Why do you think Odysseus was worried when his three men did not return?
7. How did Odysseus know the flowers were lotus flowers?
8. What was the problem when you ate lotus flowers?
9. Was the fire on the beach or in the forest? How do you know?
10. Do you think Odysseus was scared of the Lotus Eaters when he saw them?
11. Why do you think the first sailor asked Odysseus who he was when he woke up?
12. Why do you think this made Odysseus angry?
13. How can you tell Odysseus was very strong?
14. Why did Odysseus decide to leave the island straight away?
15. Do you think the three sailors ever got their memories back?

- Ask What did the sailors do when they started their journey home? (They cheered.) Discuss occasions when people cheer. Does a cheer normally indicate happiness or sadness?
- Discuss what it would be like to lose your memory and what problems this would cause.
- Write some of the words from the chapter on the board and ‘forget’ to put in the vowels. Leave spaces for them, for example s _ _ l _ d (sailed). Ask the children to supply the missing vowels. (You could ask the class to cheer when someone supplies the correct answer to each spelling.)
- Play a rhyming game. Write these words from the chapter on the board: soon, small, stop, beach, see, look, right, land. Brainstorm as a class, and write on the board, as many words that rhyme with each word as possible (for example, soon: balloon/June/moon/spoon). Elicit from the class the names of any flowers they know. Do a quick survey to find out what the children’s favourite flower is. Discuss when we give flowers to people.
- If appropriate, try some Extension Activities (see the Teacher’s Notes Introduction page 19).
- Ask What do you think will happen next in the story?