

# THE CYCLOPS

An Ancient Greek Myth

**T**he Greek king Odysseus was sailing home from the Trojan War when he and his shipmates landed on the island of Sicily. But this was where the Cyclops lived - a race of one-eyed giants each the size of a tree, who lived in caves around the volcano Mount Etna. While some Cyclops were peaceful shepherds, others were known to have a taste for human flesh...

Odysseus and his men set out to find something to eat, and soon arrived at a huge cave. Although the cave was empty, they could see that somebody lived there. Odysseus' men went inside, helped themselves to food and drink, and laid down to rest...

**H**owever the owner of the cave was Polyphemus - most dreadful of all the Cyclops. When his huge eye saw Odysseus in his home, Polyphemus was so angry he shut the cave door behind him with a large boulder and ate two of Odysseus's men. Odysseus was trapped in the cave, and in the morning Polyphemus ate two more men for breakfast before leaving to look after his sheep.



Odysseus knew he had to plan an escape, so he sharpened an olive branch and hardened it in the fire. When Polyphemus came back Odysseus offered him some wine. Soon Polyphemus started to get drunk and he offered Odysseus a present if he told him his name. Odysseus said his name was Nobody. "Well, Nobody," said Polyphemus "My present to you is that I will eat you last!" The giant then ate two more men and, full up with flesh and wine, fell asleep.



Odysseus only had six men left, but he saw his chance to escape. He took the olive branch, which was now red hot, and thrust it into Polyphemus' one huge eye! When the screams of the blinded Polyphemus brought the other Cyclops running to see what was

the matter, he told them, "Nobody has hurt me!" The other Cyclops thought nothing had happened and told him to go back to sleep...

In the morning Polyphemus removed the stone from the cave entrance, and sat in the doorway to let his sheep out to graze. He felt each sheep as it went past to make sure "Nobody" and his men didn't get away. But Odysseus had tied his men to the sheep so that Polyphemus couldn't feel them. Odysseus himself clung to the belly of a ram and escaped.

**B**ack at his ship Odysseus and his relieved companions quickly set sail. Once he was safely at sea Odysseus mocked Polyphemus telling him that he had been tricked by the great Odysseus. Outraged, Polyphemus picked up a large rock and threw it after the ship. He cursed Odysseus and asked his father, the sea-god Poseidon, to make Odysseus' journey home as dangerous as possible. And Poseidon did - but that is another story.