

Tuesday, 14th July 2020

L.I. I understand the myth of Scylla and Charybdis.

Lesson 21: Scylla and Charybdis

We had no sooner put the Sirens behind us than I saw the black of a raging storm gathering and heard thunder. We sailed on, but I could not catch a glimpse of Scylla anywhere, though I searched the cliffs in every part until my eyes were tired. Thus we sailed up the straights in terror, for on one side we had Scylla, six-headed sea-monster, and on the other the awful Charybdis whirlpool, sucking down the salt water in her dreadful way, stirring to the depths and seething like a cauldron, the whole interior vortex exposed, the rocks echoing her fearful roar.



My men turned pale with terror; and now, while all eyes were on the **impending catastrophe** of Charybdis, Scylla descended in the gloom and snatched out of my ship six of the strongest men. I saw their arms and legs dangling high in the air above my head. 'Odysseus!' they called out to me in their anguish. But Scylla had taken my comrades, struggling, up to the rocks. There she devoured them: they shrieked and stretching out their hands

their last desperate agonies. In all I have gone through on the seas, I have never had to witness a more pitiable sight than that.

Poseidon, lord of the earthquake, spied us. The sight of us sailing over the seas enraged him. He **marshalled** the clouds and, seizing his trident, stirred up the sea. He roused stormy blasts of every wind that blows, and covered the water with cloud. The gale-force East Wind, the tornado South Wind, **tempestuous** North and wicked West clashed together, rolling great waves in the tempest. My exhausted spirit trembled in **anguish**.

A mountainous wave, advancing with awesome speed, crashed down on us from above and whirled my ship around. I was torn from it, and the warring winds joined in one tremendous blow, which snapped the mast in two and flung the sail into the sea. Plunged underwater, I could not quickly fight my way up against the downrush of that almighty wave. But at last I reached the air and spat out the bitter seawater that had poured down my throat. Exhausted though I was, I did not forget my ship, but struck out after it through the waves, scrambled up, and tried to avoid the finality of death. The heavy seas thrust me with the current this way and that.

As I was turning over the last of my intelligence in my heart and mind, Poseidon the Earthshaker sent me another monstrous wave. Grim and menacing, it curled above my head, then hurtled down and scattered my ship again. Poseidon cursed me and prophesied: 'So much for you! You blinded my son Polyphemous the Cyclops, and boasted so that everyone would know your name! Now you make your miserable way across the sea, and even if you make your homeland, you will find trouble in your home.' With this, Poseidon lashed his chariot of sea-horses and drove to his underwater palace.

For two nights and two days, man of many misfortunes, I was driven by the heavy seas. Time and again I thought I was doomed. But with guidance from Athena, I regained my ship.

Activity A: Read the events below. Write a number next to each event to put it into the correct order.

- a) Poseidon curses Odysseus.
- b) Scylla devours six of Odysseus' men
- c) Odysseus scours the landscape, searching for Scylla and Charybdis.
- d) A storm gathers
- e) Odysseus is flung from his ship.
- f) Odysseus and his men sail past Charybdis.

Activity B: complete the following descriptions of Scylla and Charybdis, using the words in bold to help you.

It is the home of Scylla, a dreadful and repulsive creature. She has _____ necks, each ending in a grisly head with triple rows of fangs, set thick and close, and darkly menacing death. Her heads protrude from the **fearful abyss**. No crew can boast that they have ever sailed their ship past Scylla _____, for from every vessel she snatches and carries off six men, one with each of her _____.

Below the other of the rocks lies dreaded **Charybdis**, a _____ which sucks the dark waters down, spews them up and _____ ships down in its wild and whirling dread. Heaven keep you from Charybdis, for once the whirlpool has you, not even _____ the Earthshaker could save you from destruction then. No, you must hug _____ rock and with all speed drive your ship through, since it is far better to lose six men than your whole crew.

six	Scylla's	six heads	Poseidon	swallows	whirlpool
unscathed					

Activity C: When Odysseus faces his dilemma, does he heed Circe's advice? In the space below, explain Odysseus' decision and summarise what happens when Poseidon realises Odysseus has survived.
