

Archaeologists Hit a Homer Run

A blood thirsty Cyclops traps Odysseus and his soldiers in a cave. Thinking fast, the hero stabs the monster in the eye, blinding it. He and the soldiers escape unharmed.

That scene is one of the most action-packed passages in the *Odyssey*, an **epic**, or long poem, by the Greek poet Homer. It's also the decoration on a rare 2,500-year-old **sarcophagus**¹ that was recently found in Asia.

The coffin features a vivid color illustration of Odysseus's brave act. Odysseus is one of the most famous fighters in Greek mythology.

Construction workers found the sarcophagus in a tomb in western Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea. The tomb had already been looted of other valuables.

Only two similar coffins have been found in Cyprus. One is housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and the second is in a London museum. The colors on those coffins have faded and are not as **vibrant**² as the paintings on the newly discovered sarcophagus, experts say.

The coffin might have held a soldier. "Maybe this represents...a warrior," Pavlos Flourentzos, a Cyprus official, told reporters.



Leigh Haeger

Map of Cyprus

¹ **sarcophagus**: stone coffin

² **vibrant**: bright and lively

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where did construction workers find the sarcophagus?

- A in a tomb in western Cyprus
- B buried under a museum in Greece
- C floating in the Mediterranean Sea
- D in a cave in upstate New York

2. Read this paragraph from the passage: "The coffin features a vivid color illustration of Odysseus's brave act. Odysseus is one of the most famous fighters in Greek mythology."

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

- A to explain how Odysseus's problem was solved
- B to describe the appearance of the coffin
- C to compare the coffin to the work of the Greek poet Homer
- D to show the effect of finding an ancient coffin

3. Which of the following can you conclude will most likely happen next to the sarcophagus?

- A It will be repainted and taken apart so scientists can learn how it was made.
- B It will eventually be placed back into the tomb where it was found.
- C It will be presented to the Greek poet Homer to honor his work.
- D It will most likely be housed at a museum for people to see.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "The tomb had already been looted of other valuables."

Based on the text, the word **looted** means

- A swollen
- B beaten
- C forgotten
- D robbed

5. Which statement best describes the central idea of this passage?

- A A sarcophagus was found in Cyprus depicting a scene from the *Odyssey*.
- B Homer was a famous Greek poet who wrote an epic poem called the *Odyssey*.
- C Many people enjoy reading Greek mythology and visiting art museums.
- D Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea where many coffins have been found.

6. Who is Odysseus?

7. Why is the newly discovered sarcophagus important? How do you know? Give specific examples from the article that support your answer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus _____ his soldiers become trapped in a cave with a bloodthirsty Cyclops.

- A or
- B and
- C but
- D yet

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Construction workers recently discovered a rare sarcophagus in Asia depicting a scene from the *Odyssey*.

Who? construction workers

(did) What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** vibrant: bright and lively.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 960

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: “Archeologists Hit a Homer Run” describes how construction workers recently found a 2,500-year-old sarcophagus in a tomb in Asia. The coffin features a color illustration of a scene from the *Odyssey* by the Greek poet Homer.

1. Where did construction workers find the sarcophagus?

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- C Many people enjoy reading Greek mythology and visiting art museums.
- D Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea where many coffins have been found.

6. Who is Odysseus?

Suggested answer: Odysseus is one of the most famous fighters in Greek mythology. [paragraph 3]

7. Why is the newly discovered sarcophagus important? How do you know? Give specific examples from the article that support your answer.

Suggested answer: The sarcophagus is rare. [paragraph 1] Only two similar coffins have been found in Cyprus, and they are not nearly as vibrant as the paintings in the newly discovered coffin. [paragraph 4]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus _____ his soldiers become trapped in a cave with a bloodthirsty Cyclops.

- A or
- B and
- C but
- D yet

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Construction workers recently discovered a rare sarcophagus in Asia depicting a scene from the *Odyssey*.

Who? construction workers

(did) What? **discovered a rare sarcophagus depicting a scene from the *Odyssey***

Where? **in Asia**

When? **recently**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** vibrant: bright and lively.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.