between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Heroes and monsters: The Odyssey: The Sirens' song

How does Homer make the Sirens' song so tempting?

Lesson 6 of 14 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the English national curriculum at Key Stage 3



© 2026 Between the Lines. This sampler is free to use and print in your school. Please share the link to our website instead of the file.

What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Heroes and monsters: The Odyssey scheme for Year 7. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model paragraph and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 6, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 to 5 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared question answered as a What–How–Why paragraph, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model paragraph and an exit ticket.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters.
Strengthening	Some support: prompts for What, How and Why, a planner and a checklist.
Soaring	The most challenge: a debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

In the full scheme

- 14 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- A checkpoint (Feedback Loop kit) with a whole-class feedback sheet and improvement tasks
- A two-part end-of-unit assessment with a teacher guide, band guidance and annotated models
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Lesson 6: The Sirens' song

SEQUENCE 1: THE WANDERINGS: BOOKS 9 TO 12 · 60 MINUTES

How does Homer make the Sirens' song so tempting?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain what the Sirens promise Ulysses and why it tempts him
- Analyse how Homer uses flattery and a promise of knowledge in the song
- Write a What–How–Why paragraph on the Sirens' song

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 5 and the earlier lessons. Students check their answers from the answer slide.	2–3
8–18	Know	Pre-teach "temptation", "flattery" and "enchanting". Read the extract aloud while students follow, then ask what the Sirens promise.	4–5
18–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about the flattery, then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	6–7
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	8–9
33–53	Master	Students write one What–How–Why paragraph using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model paragraph in the last five minutes.	10–11
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of the next lesson.	12

Do Now answers

1	What did the wolves and lions do when Ulysses's men came near Circe's house?	They fawned on the men like pet dogs.
2	Which man stayed outside Circe's house and was not turned into a pig?	Eurylochus
3	What does Polyphemus say about Jove?	That the Cyclopes do not care about him.
4	What false name does Ulysses give the Cyclops?	Noman
5	What is xenia?	The Greek duty to welcome strangers as guests.

Vocabulary

temptation	a strong pull towards something you should not do
flattery	too much praise, used to get what you want
enchanting	so charming that it seems to cast a spell

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Reading

Book 12: the Sirens sing

Circe has warned Ulysses about the Sirens. His men have wax in their ears, and he is tied to the mast so that he alone can listen.

> "'Come here,' they sang, 'renowned Ulysses, honour to the Achaean name, and listen to our two voices. No one ever sailed past us without staying to hear the enchanting sweetness of our song—and he who listens will go on his way not only charmed, but wiser, for we know all the ills that the gods laid upon the Argives and Trojans before Troy, and can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world.'
>
> "They sang these words most musically, and as I longed to hear them further I made signs by frowning to my men that they should set me free; but they quickened their stroke, and Eurylochus and Perimedes bound me with still stronger bonds till we had got out of hearing of the Sirens' voices. Then my men took the wax from their ears and unbound me.

Homer, the Odyssey, translated by Samuel Butler (1900), Book 12

Word help **Achaean**: Greek · **Argives**: Greeks · **quickened their stroke**: rowed faster · **bonds**: ropes

Explode the quotation

Method
Flattery. The Sirens call Ulysses by name and praise him before they ask for anything.

Zoom in
The adjective "renowned" means famous. It names the thing every Greek hero wants most.

"renowned Ulysses, honour to the Achaean name"

Effect
Ulysses hears his own fame spoken back to him, so the song feels meant for him alone.

Purpose
Homer makes the danger real. If the song only sounded pretty, Ulysses would not need the ropes.

Hinge question

The Sirens say they "can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world". What are they promising Ulysses?

A. Gold and treasure to fill his ship.

B. Knowledge of everything, which a clever man would want. (the right answer)

C. A quick way home to Ithaca.

What the answers tell you

A means the student is guessing from other episodes: ask them to find the word "everything" in the song. C means the student is thinking of Ulysses's wish for home: point out that the Sirens never mention Ithaca. These may be your students who start on Securing.

Why the answer is right

The Sirens say they know all that happened at Troy and all that will happen, and Ulysses is a man who loves to know.

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Master task

How does Homer make the Sirens' song so tempting?

Securing the most support

Quotations to choose from

"renowned Ulysses, honour to the Achaean name"

"the enchanting sweetness of our song"

"can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world"

Starters

Homer makes the Sirens' song tempting by ____. Homer writes ____. The ____ (adjective) ____ (word class) ____ suggests ____. Homer wants readers to feel ____ because ____.

Strengthening some support

Prompts

What: Make a clear point that answers the question.

How: Choose a short quotation. Name the method, such as flattery or a promise, and zoom in on one word.

Why: Why does Homer make the song so hard to resist? Think about what kind of hero Ulysses is.

Soaring the most challenge

The debate

"The Sirens are dangerous because of what they say, and the sound of their voices matters less. How far do you agree?"

Write two paragraphs. In the second, give an alternative reading that begins with "Alternatively".

Model paragraph

What	Homer makes the Sirens' song tempting by giving Ulysses exactly what a proud and clever man wants.
How	They call to "renowned Ulysses, honour to the Achaean name". The flattering adjective "renowned" praises his fame before they ask for anything. Then they promise that they "can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world".
Why	Ulysses is famous for his clever mind, so a promise of knowledge is hard to refuse. Homer shows that temptation works best when it flatters a person's strengths. That is why Ulysses needs the mast and the ropes.

Exit ticket

The Sirens' song is hard to resist because...

Teacher notes

Subject knowledge

Circe has told Ulysses to stop his men's ears with wax and to have himself tied to the mast, so that only he hears the song. The Sirens flatter first, with his name and his fame, then promise knowledge of Troy and of the whole world. They never mention danger. Ulysses has planned for his own weakness, which links to the unit question: his cunning includes knowing what will tempt him. Eurylochus and Perimedes tie him tighter when he signals to be freed.

Common misconceptions

- Thinking the Sirens are tempting only because they sing well. Homer gives them flattery and a promise of knowledge.
- Retelling the song instead of explaining what the words make Ulysses want.
- Thinking the crew hear the song. Their ears are blocked, and only Ulysses listens.
- Naming flattery with no effect attached.

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school