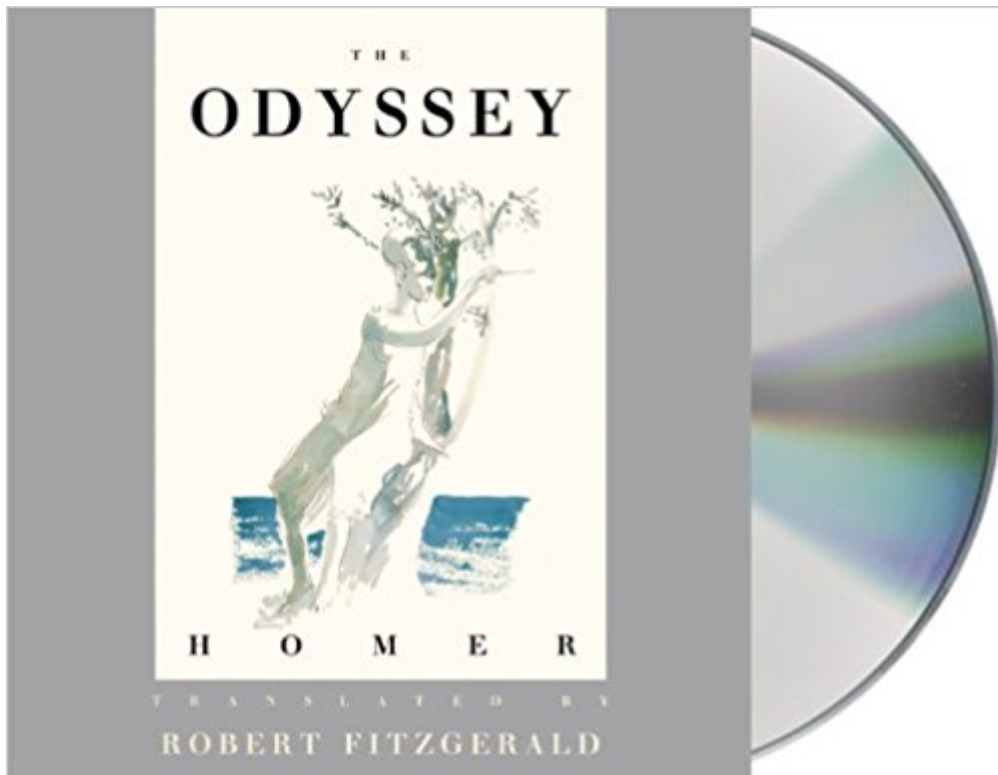




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# The Odyssey: The Fitzgerald Translation



## Synopsis

Robert Fitzgerald's translation of *The Odyssey* has been the standard translation for more than three generations of students and poets. Macmillan Audio is delighted to publish the first ever audio edition of this classic work, the greatest of all epic poems. Fitzgerald's supple verse is ideally suited for audio, recounting the story of Odysseus' long journey back to his wife and home after the Trojan War. Homer's tale of love, adventure, food and drink, sensual pleasure, and mortal danger reaches the English-language listener in all its glory. In keeping with the oral tradition of the time, Dan Stevens, whose many celebrated performances include *Downton Abbey's* Matthew Crawley, makes this epic tale come alive. The listener becomes totally immersed in the adventure and drama of the story – this is the way *The Odyssey* was meant to be experienced. Also included on the program is a portion of the poem read in ancient Greek so that listeners may experience the lyricism and music of the original language.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Fagles's translation is a jaw-droppingly beautiful rendering of Homer's *Odyssey*, the most accessible and enthralling epic of classical Greece. Fagles captures the rapid and direct language of the original Greek, while telling the story of Odysseus in lyrics that ring with a clear, energetic voice. The story itself has never seemed more dynamic, the action more compelling, nor the descriptions so brilliant in detail. It is often said that every age demands its own translation of the classics. Fagles's work is a triumph because he has not merely provided a contemporary version of Homer's classic poem, but has located the right language for the timeless character of this great

tale. Fagles brings the Odyssey so near, one wonders if the Hollywood adaption can be far behind. This is a terrific book. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Robert Fagles's 1990 translation of *The Iliad* was highly praised; here, he moves to *The Odyssey*. As in the previous work, he adroitly mixes contemporary language with the driving rhythms of the original. The first line reads: "Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns/ driven time and again off course once he had plundered/ the hallowed heights of Troy." Hellenic scholar Bernard Knox contributes extensive introductory commentary, providing both historical and literary perspective. Notes, a pronouncing glossary, genealogies, a bibliography and maps of Homer's world are included. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Before I begin, a disclaimer. This review is not written to help you decide whether to read the Iliad. It is to help you decide which translation of the Iliad to choose. In short: In 2015, this is the best translation to get. Get it in paper, not Kindle. Peter Green states in the introduction that he is following in the footsteps of Lattimore, to preserve as much of the poem in Greek--wording, sentence structure, meter, and so on--in English, but to also make it declaimable. It is a translation to be read aloud. Thus, it is also a challenge to Fagles's translation, among whose virtues is how well it works as an audiobook. To review, there are several major verse modern translations of the Iliad. Lattimore's is closest to the original Greek, and for undergraduate work can substitute for the original well enough. There is the Fagles translation, in modern free verse, is wonderful to read aloud. The Fagles Odyssey was on Selected Shorts once, and for a long time after I insisted that there was no other worthwhile contemporary translation of Homer. I swore by it. Lombardo's translation is pretty common in colleges because of the price and the slangy presentation. Then there is Fitzgerald, which some swear by, but Fitzgerald's translation is loose with the Greek and mannered and fey in its English. It even translates Odysseus as "Ulysses," a sure sign that fidelity to the Greek is not worth the translator's trouble. I am missing some others, I'm sure. So let us begin at the beginning. In the Greek, the Iliad has

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 ÃfÂ;Ã Â Ã Ë±ÃfÂ•Ã â ;ÃfÂ Ã Â ÃfÂ Ã Â»ÃfÂ;Ã Â¿Ã â ÃfÂ Ã Â¿ÃfÂ•Ã â " Quite

literally, "Rage! sing goddess of the son of Peleus Achilles."

Ῥῆς Ἀχιλλέως Πηλεΐδης ὀδύνη means, more or less, the anger that engenders revenge, rage, wrath, anger are all ok to some degree. (It's complicated, an entire scholarly treatise is written on the meaning of the word.) Green gives, "Wrath, goddess, sing of Achilles Peleus's son's [/ wrath]." Fagles gives "Rage--Goddess sing the rage of Peleus's son Achilles." Lattimore gives "Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus." Green and Fagles are right to put the first word first. This is poetry, after all, the order of the words matter, the first especially. The first word is the theme of the poem, the way it is directed first against Agamemnon, then toward the Trojans, and then tempered for a common moment of humanity, is the internal trajectory of the whole epic. Wrath might be best of all, since it conveys that it is anger in a sense that is unfamiliar to modern readers. Once, in my second year of taking Greek, I was told that there was no use of literal translations. Take it far enough, and you wind up with a textbook on how to read the book in the original Greek. Make it into readable English, and you wind up with a host of compromises where thousands of close translations might do. Go far enough you wind up with Girardoux's "The Trojan War Will Not Take Place," worthwhile on its own, but not really a "translation." That professor preferred Fitzgerald, but easy for her to do, she could read anything in Greek without any help. For us mortals with mostly forgotten Greek, or no Greek at all, closeness to the original in a translation should be treasured. In the end, translating Homer is a game of compromises, How much of the strangeness of 2500 year old lines and 3200 year old motivations do you keep? Dactylic hexameter calls for lines much longer than any form of English verse, so shorter lines or not? And so on. For me, Fagles is as far to compromise with how English verse should go as I am willing to accept. For what it's worth, Lattimore's English verse is better than his critics complain of. Starting from no knowledge of Greek, I'd choose Green. Over Lattimore because it's friendlier for the beginner and not worse as far as I can tell for a serious third reading. Over Fagles because the true-to-the-Greek line lengths convey the way the poem drives itself forward better in Green's line by line than in Fagles's free verse. Also. The introduction includes a plot summary of the whole Trojan War, of which the Iliad only covers a small portion. I have never seen such a succinct and complete synopsis before. There is also a synopsis of the poem keyed to the poem in the back matter to help find your place, an enlightening glossary of names and concepts to help you through your first read, and footnotes to inform the reader of context that has since been lost. Word to the wise re: Kindles. These are long verse lines. To get complete lines on a Kindle screen, you need a Kindle that allows text to display in landscape mode. Even then, complete lines only work in a very small font size. Get this in hardback for now. The hardback is stitched and bound

to keep, so it is worth your money.

This is not a book review, but a warning: there is a technical problem with this page. I received a different translation than the one shown here, and apparently the page changes randomly (since someone else says this is the page for buying a copy of the Iliad!). I've reported the problem and it is being looked into. Because you can't leave a review without a star rating, I've using one star for this warning. That's no reflection on the book described here, which I hope to purchase once corrects this problem. I know this is an unusual use of book reviews, but I think it's important for people to know that if they purchase from this page there is no telling what they might receive. I will delete this once the problem is solved,

This review is concerned with the translation of Homer's Iliad by Anthony Verity: it is about the intellectual product, not some essentially irrelevant technical issue regarding the vending of the work. Anthony Verity set out to faithfully translate the original text (as best we know it) of Homer's great poem. He clearly states that "It does not claim to be poetry: my aim has been to use a straightforward English register and to keep closely to the Greek, allowing Homer to speak for himself -- for example, in the use of repeated epithets and descriptions of recurrent scenes." Verity has carefully preserved the line numeration of the original, yielding a translation which matches the original line by line. The first-time reader of the Iliad might prefer a more classically poetic rendition, such as those by Lattimore, Fitzgerald, or Ewings, or perhaps a faster moving translation such as those by Lombardo, Reck, and, now, Mitchell. But with the Verity translation, the reader can be assured that he/she is getting something that hews quite closely to the original in structure and language, with style and word choices not artificially forced by some particular metrical scheme or in pursuit of rapidity as an end in itself. And the reader may be assured that the translation is by no means dull and plodding. Verity's choice to present his translation in what physically looks like poetic verse (in separate lines rather than a solid mass of prose) serves both to remind us of the Iliad's origin as a great poem as well as enhance its value as a classroom tool and reference, with lines of the original text readily located in Verity's rendition. And his retention of the characteristic epithets as vital to the poem's meaning (rather than dismissing them as merely technical expedients used to achieve a set meter, as some translators are prone to do) does much to preserve an authentic Homeric flavor. This translation may not have been intentionally written as free verse, but de facto it functions as a free verse poem. This is not the finest English poetic rendition of Homer's great poem, but it may well be the best way for an English language reader to best approach the real heart of the

Iliad.

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