**Article on Sirens Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Sirens**

**Directions: Read the article and mark the text. 15 points- DUE END OF HOUR**

* Circle: Key Terms
* Underline: Main Ideas
* Quick text notes in the margins to explain pionts
* Bracket: Evidence (to support that they are symbolic for temptation)
* 1 paragraph summary at the end

**S**UNDAY, MAY 18, 2014

AVOIDING THE SIREN TEMPTATION TRAP: A LESSON FROM HOMER

by [Jonathan McLatchie](https://crossexamined.org/author/jonathan-m/) https://crossexamined.org/avoiding-siren-temptation-trap/

The Sirens were mythical creatures spoken of in many ancient Greek stories, notably in the writings of the poet Homer (such as the Odyssey). The Sirens were beautiful creatures portrayed as seductively attractive women who lured and ensnared unsuspecting sailors with their enchanting music and hypnotizing voices. Sirens may have been beautiful, but they were also extremely dangerous.

In the Odyssey, when Odysseus leaves the home of the goddess Circe, Circe warns Odysseus about the Sirens, saying of them,

*Next, where the Sirens dwells, you plough the seas; Their song is death, and makes destruction please. Unblest the man, whom music wins to stay nigh the cursed shore and listen to the lay. No more that wretch shall view the joys of life His blooming offspring, or his beauteous wife! In verdant meads they sport; and wide around lie human bones that whiten all the ground: The ground polluted floats with human gore, And human carnage taints the dreadful shore. Fly swift the dangerous coast: let every ear be stopp’d against the song! ’tis death to hear! Firm to the mast with chains thyself be bound, Nor trust thy virtue to the enchanting sound. If, mad with transport, freedom thou demand, Be every fetter strain’d, and added band to band.*

The Sirens were cannibals. They would lure unsuspecting mariners, oblivious to the danger they were in, to their island, to be shipwrecked on the rocky coast. **What a metaphor for the temptation we face as Christians! And just like temptation, the Sirens would offer a promise of delight, with a false assurance that the victim would be able to leave when he pleased.**

**Odysseus’ Encounter With The Sirens**

In the Odyssey, Odysseus orders his men to plug their ears with beeswax. He himself, curious to know what the Sirens sounded like, asked to be tied tightly to the mast and leave him bound no matter how much he pleaded and begged to be released. He said “Me, me alone, with fetters firmly bound, the gods allow to hear the dangerous sound. Hear and obey; if freedom I demand, be every fetter strain’d, be added band to band.” He heard the voice of the Sirens, crying out to him,

*Oh stay, O pride of Greece! Ulysses stay! Oh cease thy course, and listen to our lay! Blest is the man ordain’d our voice to hear, The song instructs the soul, and charms the ear. Approach! Thy soul shall into raptures rise! Approach! And learn new wisdom from the wise! We know whate’er the kings of mighty name achieved at Ilion in the field of fame; Whate’er beneath the sun’s bright journey lies. Oh stay, and learn new wisdom from the wise!*

**The Sirens, which typify worldly temptation, promise to deliver you the desires of your heart. In the case of Odysseus, this was wisdom. But their message was deceptive. To cease his course and approach the Sirens would mean certain death. He may enjoy the pleasure of the Sirens’ music for a short time, but the experience would be short lived. His fate would be to join the numerous other mariners whose bones littered the island. What a parallel for temptation!** **In like-manner, temptation gives the promise of pleasure and enjoyment. It promises to give you the desires and longings of your heart, that “Thy soul shall into raptures rise!” If it didn’t make those promises, it would not be tempting! It only asks that you “cease thy course” and “Approach!”: Cease from the race of faith; from the course that God has marked out for you; from your walk with Christ; and take another path, a seemingly more pleasurable one.**

**Notice also that the Sirens call out to Odysseus (Ulysses) by his name and promises the fulfillment of a desire that is specific to him (wisdom). The temptation is specific to the individual. Likewise, Satan knows our weaknesses and desires and will strike at precisely the point at which we are most vulnerable to falling.**

Failing to sense the danger, victims do not realize that the ground around the Sirens is littered with bones: Yielding to temptation may feel good for a season, but it will ultimately ruin you if you persist. King David’s Siren was Bathsheba, with whom he committed adultery having murdered her husband Uriah. He ultimately came to regret his foolish actions when confronting the consequences later.

Remarkably, although Odysseus was well aware of how dangerous the Sirens were, he begged to be released so that he might go to them, but his men bound him still tighter. Such is the way of temptation: It promises some short-term gain or pleasure, such that we completely disregard the disastrous long-term consequences.

The Sirens were like the seductive woman spoken of in Proverbs 9:13-18:

*The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest place of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” and to him who lacks sense, she says, “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”****But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol****.*

How did Odysseus and his men successfully battle the Sirens’ seduction? Odysseus was tied to the mast, and his sailors plugged their ears with beeswax. From this, we can glean two lessons in battling temptation. One is to eliminate our ability to respond to temptation. Jesus put it this way (Matthew 5:29-30):

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Such a principle was adopted by Odysseus. Although he could hear the Sirens’ voice and was tempted, he had no ability to yield to the temptation. The desire was still there, but he, being roped to the mast of the ship, was unable to respond to it. Similarly, the follower of Christ ought to also abide by this principle: If there is something in your life that is consistently presenting opportunity for you to yield to temptation, get rid of it if at all possible! Odysseus had been warned by Circe not to “trust thy virtue to the enchanting sound.” Often, the character of temptation is such that we must flee from temptation rather than engage in hand-to-hand combat with it. Joseph exercised this principle in running from Potiphars’ wife when she attempted to seduce him to sleep with her.

The second lesson is that plugging our ears, so that we do not hear temptations’ seductive music, is an effective way to gain victory. Take care to guard your senses, particularly your eyes and ears. There is so much sensual imagery around today that the need to protect one’s eyes is more important now than ever before

**Jason’s Encounter With The Sirens**

In the Argonautica, by Apollonius Rhodius, Jason had received warning from the centaur, Chiron, that Orpheus was needed in his travels. Orpheus ultimately saved the sailors  from falling victim to the Sirens’ seduction. We read,

*And soon they saw a fair island, Anthemoessa, where the clear-voiced Sirens, daughters of Archelous, used to beguile with their sweet songs whoever cast anchor there, and then destroy them. Them lovely Teripsichore, one of the Muses, bare, united with Achelous; and once they tended Demeter’s noble daughter still unwed, and sang to her in chorus; and at that time they were fashioned in part like birds and in part like maidens to behold. And ever on the watch from their place of prospect with its fair haven, often from many had they taken away their sweet return, consuming them with wasting desire; and suddenly to the heroes too, they sent forth from their lips a lily-like voice. And they were already about to cast from the ship the hawsers to the shore, had not****Thracian Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, stringing in his hands his Bistonian lyre, rung forth the hasty snatch of a rippling melody so that their ears might be filled with the sound of his twanging; and the lyre overcame the maidens’ voice.***

**Conclusion**

The Sirens present a powerful metaphor for the temptation faced by Christians. Like the Sirens, the temptation to fall into sin can be highly enticing and seductive. It may offer you pleasure here and now, but remember that the island is littered with the bones of previous victims. A Christian must not steer off from the course marked out for him. Rather, “let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The Christian has means in his toolbox to gain victory over temptation. The stories spoken of above illustrate three ways in which yielding to temptation may be avoided: (1) Restricting our ability to respond to temptation; (2) Guarding our senses, particularly our eyes and ears; and (3) Listening to the sweeter melody of Christ.

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**Focus Question Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Sirens: The Odyssey. 25 points**

Explain how the Sirens episode may be interpreted as a symbol for *temptation*

* **Third Person**
* **Each box should flow into the next and sound like one paragraph**
* **To cite the book: “Your quote would go here” (Homer #).**

**Answer Plan**

1. Restate the question into a statement. (Sentence Block 1)
2. Respond with your answer to the question. (Sentence Block 2)
3. Support with an example (direct quote) from the text. (Sentence Block 3)
4. Explain the quote and its relevance. (Sentence Block 4)
5. Conclude by tying the last question to the topic.

 (Sentence Block 5)

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**Focus Question Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Scylla and Charybdis: The Odyssey. 25 points**

Explain how Scylla and Charybdis episode may be interpreted as a symbol for a *dilemma*.

* **Third Person**
* **Each box should flow into the next and sound like one paragraph**
* **To cite the book: “Your quote would go here” (Homer #).**

**Answer Plan**

1. Restate the question into a statement. (Sentence Block 1)
2. Respond with your answer to the question. (Sentence Block 2)
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