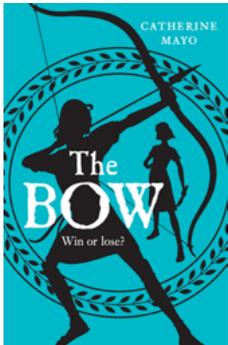


Walker Books Classroom Ideas



The Bow

Author: Catherine Mayo
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

"There's only one arrow, but you only have to shoot one man. I know you won't miss."

War is coming to Bronze Age Greece. It's time to skill up. Odysseus's challenges are mounting. Can he find his grandfather's hidden gold? Find the strength to string and shoot the Great Bow of Eurytos, which no man has done for generations? Toughest of all, can he persuade a girl to love him? Win some ... lose some.

Author Information:

Catherine Mayo grew up in Auckland and was a compulsive reader and dreamer. With academics in her DNA (her dad was a research scientist and her grandfather a professor of philosophy) it was taken for granted she would follow the same path. She studied many things at Auckland University – history, philosophy, geology, French, music, performance violin and art history – before life took an unexpected turn and she began an apprenticeship in violin-making and restoration. About 10 years ago she started writing, urged on by the stories and dreams that filled her head since she was a child. She has since won several prizes in short story competitions. Her first book, *Murder at Mykenai*, was published by Walker Books in 2013, and its sequel, *The Bow*, is due out in June 2014.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Secondary school years Aus 8-10 NZ 10-11
- Ages 14+

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History

Example of:

- Novel
- Historical fiction

Themes/ Ideas:

- Action
- Adventure
- Classical history
- Friendship

National Curriculum Focus:*

Content descriptions include:

English

Year 8
ACELA1547
ACELT1626
ACELT1627
ACELT1629
ACELT1807
ACELT1630

Year 9
ACELA1553
ACELA1561
ACELT1633
ACELT1771
ACELT1634
ACELT1635
ACELT1636
ACELT1637

Year 10
ACELT1640
ACELT1812
ACELT1642
ACELT1774
ACELY1749

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Catherine Mayo on *The Bow*

Sometimes, when you write a book, you're able to control the plot and the characters enough to end up where you expected. But sometimes the characters take over, or the plot makes an unplanned right-angle turn. Suddenly you find yourself in a completely different place, with unexpected people hassling you for attention.

This can be very exciting. And it's exactly what happened to me with my first book, *Murder at Mykenai*. The only let-down was that when Odysseus became so caught up in his friend Menelaos's problems, I no longer had space to write the story about Odysseus and the great bow of Eurytos. Actually it was a really big let-down, because that was what the book was supposed to be all about.

This time, with Menelaos's problems more or less sorted, Odysseus has the new book to himself. Or that's what he thought when we began. He didn't count on sharing space with a smart, stropy slave girl. Even worse, this girl thinks rather less of him than he would like. After all, isn't he the son of a king? Clever, loyal, resilient, resourceful, subtle, mostly lucky, never foolhardy, cautious rather than untrusting, versatile and unquestionably brave? How can she resist him?

And what about the great bow? Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* tells how Odysseus had been given a great bow, a rival weapon to the famous bow of Herakles. This is the bow Odysseus reclaims when he arrives home after twenty long years of war and wandering. And it's the same bow he defends himself and his family with against the murderous suitors at the end of the poem.

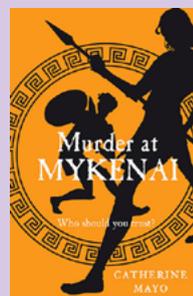
But when he was first given the bow, Homer says he was "still a boy". Why, I wondered, would someone give such a valuable heirloom to a child?

The other question that helped drive the story along came from some random map reading – always a passion of mine. One day I noticed something weird about Arkadia, in Greece. A central plain, surrounded by mountains, has rivers running into it but none running out again. Where, I thought, does all the water go?

While finding out the answer, I discovered a secret cave, a lost lake and much more. These elements became almost as important to *The Bow* as the characters themselves.



Photo Credit: Ollie Dale



Murder at Mykenai
Catherine Mayo
9781922077943
AU\$17.95/NZ\$19.99
[Classroom Ideas available](#)

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**The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows
of Ava Lavender**
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9781406348088
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Discussion Questions and Activities

Chapter One

- Odysseus is out hunting with his dog Argos and his friend Menelaos when he hears sounds of mourning. What is his immediate worry? What would you worry about?
- What does Menelaos notice about the harbour?
- Who has King Thyestes murdered? Who is he after now?
- “The noise broke over him like a wave” (page 20) and “their arms writhing like a field of snakes” (page 21) are both examples of what language device? They are both imagery that suggest danger. Why do you think the writer did this?
- Why is Antikleia cutting her hair?
- The mourners are wearing white in this scene. How does this compare with your culture’s mourning rituals? What other interesting behaviour did you notice?

Chapter Two

- Why is Laertes angry with his dead father?
- What reason did the grandfather have for disapproving of his son’s marriage?
- Why can’t Laertes go to see his father’s burial site?
- What do you think Odysseus is scheming?
- What do you think “look beyond the jaws of death” (page 28) means?
- Grieving for someone you have mixed feelings about is problematical. What makes it complicated?

Chapter Three

- Who are the two exotic travellers?
- Why are they in disguise?
- How did Eurybates learn Egyptian? Why is it good that he was actually speaking Egyptian?
- Make up your own Egyptian-style hideous death and rotting curse. You can conjure maggots out of any orifice you like.

Chapter Four

- Find a map of this part of the world and sketch the journey so far. You will be adding to this as you read.
- What are your impressions of Diomedes, Stenelos and King Alkmaion?
- Why is the king reluctant to help the Egyptian priest and his servant?
- What changes his mind?

Chapter Five

- What does it say about Odysseus that he goes out exploring when there is so much danger about?
- Who arranges a secret meeting with Eurybates?
- What concern of Eurybates is a surprise?
- How has the author left the chapter? What effect does this have on the reader? What do you want to find out?

Chapter Six

- Odysseus’s grandfather converted all his wealth into gold and then hid it in his tomb. Why do you think he did this?
- What trick has Diomedes played with his women mourners?
- Playing tricks or fooling people seems to be a reoccurring

idea in the story so far. How many tricks or people in disguise can you think of?

- Do people still do this today? What is a recent example from the news?

Chapter Seven

- Why doesn’t the arrow hurt Odysseus?
- Who ambushes them and why?
- Retell the chariot ride from Odysseus’s point of view.
- Diomedes calls on Blessed Athena. Find five facts about Athena.

Chapter Eight

- What are Diomedes’s thoughts about the “fat servant boy” over the course of this chapter? Name three.
- Why must Eurybates and Odysseus stay for weeks?
- What worries would be on Odysseus’s mind?
- What reason does Diomedes give for not accepting any gold?

Chapter Nine

- Odysseus compares Stenelos to Herakles. This name is sometimes spelt “Heracles”. Find out about Heracles and record five facts.
- How do Eurybates and Odysseus entertain themselves in their room?
- Imagine you are Eurybates: how is he feeling about being held in this room?
- Stenelos is an interesting character. What interests Odysseus about him?

Chapter Ten

- Imagine you are Stenelos and write your diary entries for the last few nights recording your thoughts on Odysseus.
- Who was Eurytos?

Chapter Eleven

- Would you like to study under Stenelos? What would be good and what would be bad about being his student?
- How would you do in this situation?

Chapter Twelve

- Odysseus is determined to succeed at his training. What quality does this show about him?
- When Odysseus is acting the part of a servant, what does he become distracted by?
- How does Stenelos react to the discussion about the servant girl?

Chapter Thirteen

- What is your impression of Skotia?
- Why doesn’t Odysseus show her his true self?
- Skotia thinks of Odysseus as a “smarmy ball of mutton fat with his greasy hair” (page 102) and a “rancid slug” (page 103). Create two insults for someone who revolts you.



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Chapter Fourteen

- Odysseus promises to pretend to have been with Skotia to save her from punishment. Does Skotia trust him?
- How did Skotia become a slave?
- How would you feel if someone told you this had happened to them? What advice would you give them?
- Odysseus thinks to himself that he “couldn’t worry about every last piece of misery in the world” (page 110). What is your reaction to this thought?

Chapter Fifteen

- Stenelos refuses to teach Odysseus because of Skotia. Why doesn’t Odysseus tell the truth?
- Do you agree with Stenelos?
- Diomedes tries to help Odysseus first by setting up a room for Skotia and Odysseus and then by sending her away so Odysseus can continue his training. Diomedes gives the task to Meskes. What hints are there that something will go wrong?
- Diomedes thinks, “Poseidon take it” (page 114). Find out five facts about Poseidon.

Chapter Sixteen

- Thyestes’s army has attacked. All the townspeople are running. Odysseus sees Skotia and is shocked. Why?
- Is this Odysseus’s fault?
- Stenelos swears by Hades. Who is Hades?
- What do you predict will happen next?

Chapter Seventeen

- Why aren’t Odysseus and Eurybates allowed to fight?
- Find out about and record the story of Sisyphus’s boulders in your own words.
- What does Stenelos give Odysseus?
- Was Stenelos a good teacher?

Chapter Eighteen

- Skotia was falsely accused of stealing and was badly beaten. Who does she blame? Who do you feel was responsible?
- What allows her to escape?
- Who are the men who attack her and who rescues her?
- What treasure has Skotia rescued before she ran away? Why is it so precious to her?

Chapter Nineteen

- What puzzles Skotia about her rescuers?
- What will lead the enemy to find these three?
- Find out what a stadion (plural: stadia) is. What modern word is similar to this and how is it used?
- What plan do Odysseus, Eurybates and Skotia finally agree upon?

Chapter Twenty

- Odysseus is troubled by many things. Describe two concerns.
- Find out why being a cretin is an insult.
- How does Skotia save them?
- Why can’t the men in the boats see Odysseus, Eurybates and Skotia just under the water?

Chapter Twenty-One

- Odysseus, Eurybates and Skotia steal a boat and escape out to sea. Explain how they are able to do this without being seen.
- Skotia has mixed emotions about these “women”. Why does she stay with them?
- What does Skotia notice about the hands of the shorter “woman”?
- When Skotia’s feet are bloody and sore, the “women” each help her. What do they do?

Chapter Twenty-Two

- Skotia is convinced that one of the rescuers wants to kill her. She decided it was probably the Cypriot. What changes her mind?
- Odysseus unintentionally upsets Skotia by referring to her old shoes. Why does she feel offended?
- What is important about the name Heketas? What information does it give Odysseus?
- What do you think are Eurybates’ feelings about Skotia?

Chapter Twenty-Three

- What clues does Skotia have that the Cypriot is actually an aristocrat?
- She has been quick to judge him. Where else have we seen quick judgements that have been wrong? What do you think the author is telling us?
- If you were told a secret, would you bite your own tongue off before revealing it?
- Skotia must have complicated feelings about going home. What mix of emotions might she be feeling?

Chapter Twenty-Four

- Explain the simile, “Wearing her silence like armour” (page 174).
- What does Skotia mean by saying, “Safe? ... What’s that?” (page 174).
- What does she find in her old house? Skotia immediately presumes that her father put it there but then she soon learns that he was dead. Who could have left it by her old sleeping spot?

Chapter Twenty-Five

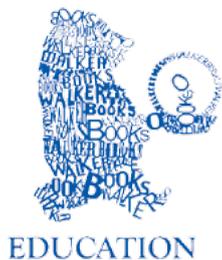
- After Skotia finds her father’s grave, she, Eurybates and Odysseus hear people coming. While hiding in the bushes, the three of them overhear a conversation about themselves. What is known about them?
- Odysseus and Eurybates kill the three men and steal their horses. How will this action make Odysseus feel? How will it make Skotia feel?
- Why is it so difficult for Odysseus to mount the horse?

Chapter Twenty-Six

- How do you feel when Odysseus thinks, “clever for a girl!” (page 186)?
- What is making Odysseus full of nausea?
- What do you imagine you would feel in his situation?
- Name all the ways Skotia has helped them.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

- Find out about Demeter.
- Update the adventures of Odysseus on your map of the area.



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- How does Skotia know this cave so well?
- Odysseus keeps guard while Skotia goes through a narrow opening. Then Eurybates pushes all their gear through and squeezes through himself. Finally Odysseus goes to follow but gets stuck. Why does the author end the chapter there?

Chapter Twenty-Eight

- How does Skotia accidentally frighten Odysseus?
- Tell, in your own words, the story of Demeter and her daughter Persephone. How is their story similar or different to Skotia and her mother?
- Who is the Ferryman's dog?
- What is your answer to the question Skotia asks at the end of the chapter; "Haven't I done enough to deserve the truth?" (page 202).

Chapter Twenty-Nine

- Why do you think Skotia goes quiet at the mention of their real names?
- Who is Orpheus and why did he travel to the Underworld?
- Why does Odysseus leave his precious gift from Stenelos?
- Can you explain the strange feelings Odysseus has at the edge of the underground passage?

Chapter Thirty

- Could you stand to hide in a cave for three days?
- When they emerge, where do they plan to go next?
- Trace their movements on your map.
- Skotia never realised that she was attractive, even to the awful Meskes. What connection does she finally make?

Chapter Thirty-One

- Powerful thoughts come thick and fast in this and the last chapter. One realisation is about Skotia's mother. What new way of thinking about her does Odysseus suggest?
- Skotia explains why she won't go to Ithaka. What reason does she give? Would you feel this way too if you were in her situation?
- Even today, the majority of couples in the world come from similar economic backgrounds. Why do you think this still happens? Can you think of any exceptions?

Chapter Thirty-Two

- Odysseus is longing for Skotia. What do you think she is feeling?
- Why would Messenians capture Ithakan shepherds and sheep?
- How do Odysseus and Eurybates find out about this theft?

Chapter Thirty-Three

- Odysseus immediately assumes the worst. He did this in the opening of the book. How are those thoughts similar?
- Locate Kyparissia's harbour on your map. Continue tracing their journey.
- What language device is "leave these sewer rats to fester in their own stench" (page 236)?
- How does Odysseus get the two of them on the homeward bound boat?

Chapter Thirty-Four

- Retell the events of this chapter either, from the point of view of Eurybates, Menelaos or Laertes.
- Update your map.

Chapter Thirty-Five

- In this chapter the author stops before we hear Odysseus's proposal to the counsel. Later she doesn't tell us Odysseus' secret plan. What effect does this withholding have on the reader?
- What clues are there that Odysseus's parents were delighted to have him home safely?

Chapter Thirty-Six

- What does Skotia feel towards Odysseus?
- The writer has suggested that Skotia has had an important dream, but she doesn't explain it to the readers. How does this build suspense?

Chapter Thirty-Seven

- An administrator comes to the mountains to count sheep for the records and also to warn them they will lose half of the sheep for keeping secret their theft. Describe the administrator's looks.
- What reason does the administrator give for making new records?
- What are your impressions of Phylas?

Chapter Thirty-Eight

- Odysseus and Menelaos formally accused the Kyparissians of stealing Ithakan shepherds and sheep. King Nestor will judge the trial. How would you describe King Nestor?
- Skotia and her aunt Danae have returned to the caves of Demeter. They are acting on the warnings of Skotia's dreams. Do you believe that dreams can be warnings?
- Both Odysseus and Skotia are being trusted by adults. Which young person is in more danger?

Chapter Thirty-Nine

- Who do you think tried to attack Menelaos and Odysseus in the night?
- What are the possible consequences of the trial?
- Why is Odysseus having trouble concentrating?

Chapter Forty

- Describe how you would feel if you were sixteen years old and representing your country in a law court.
- What is Didaion's hall like? Who are the spectators?
- What strategy does Odysseus use to prove the case for Ithaka?
- What surprises Didaion at the end of this chapter?

Chapter Forty-One

- Odysseus brings records with his father's seal on them from home which match the recent records taken in the mountains and sealed by Phylas. In panic, Phylas confesses to part of the crime. What part does he admit to? Who does Phylas blame?
- What is chicanery?
- Did you guess the identity of the scribe earlier? How many disguises has Odysseus used so far?



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Chapter Forty-Two

- Is Odysseus imagining Skotia in the crowd? Why would she be so far away from Arkadia?
- Who will organise collecting the sheep so they can be returned on the “borrowed” ships?
- Where are Odysseus and Menelaos going?
- Odysseus says that he doesn’t trust Phylas? Why not?

Chapter Forty-Three

- Menelaos and Odysseus are at the home of Ortilochos for the festival of a goddess. Which goddess?
- A stranger arrives with a large case. Who is he and what is inside the case?
- What does Menelaos’s comment about Odysseus stringing the bow say about his attitude towards his friend?

Chapter Forty-Four

- What reason did Iphitos give for not staying for the ceremony?
- Odysseus and Menelaos watch the festival. What present-day ceremonies do you know of that use any of these elements? Fire, singing, dancing, blood to symbolize sacrifice, incense or statues? In what ways has worship not changed?
- Who beckons Odysseus into the forest?

Chapter Forty-Five

- Skotia explains why she came. What does she say?
- Odysseus’s fears are not for himself. Who are they for?
- What do you imagine Aunt Danae is thinking?

Chapter Forty-Six

- Describe Skotia’s dream.
- What has Skotia brought to Odysseus? Why does this frighten Odysseus?
- What does Odysseus discover about his would-be attackers on the boat in the Kyparissia Harbour?
- Skotia notices something about the bow she has returned to Odysseus. What does she say? What reaction does Odysseus have?

Chapter Forty-Seven

- Skotia wants to be free. What does she mean by that?
- Odysseus loves Skotia but she doesn’t feel the same way about him. They don’t make love because it doesn’t feel right for both of them. When else in the book has this happened? What does it tell us about Odysseus?
- Who experiences the dream at the end of the chapter?

Chapter Forty-Eight

- What happens that surprises Eurybates?
- Why does Meges wonder what Olli (Odysseus) will say on the matter?
- This is another case of misjudging people. Who misjudged Phylas? Who did Phylas misjudge?

Chapter Forty-Nine

- When Odysseus awakes, is he alone?
- Odysseus is split between getting his hands on the bow of Eurytos and helping his father get warships. Who interrupts his thoughts?
- What is Menelaos’s new obsession?

Chapter Fifty

- What has crushed Iphitos’s hopes and dreams?
- Who has delivered this bad news?
- What does Odysseus mean by thinking, “With his own life at stake, he couldn’t afford scruples” (page 332)?
- Why does Skotia feel she must return to see Odysseus?
- What event is going to take place that night?

Chapter Fifty-One

- Why is Menelaos drinking so much?
- Describe what must be done to win the contest.
- What disagreement do Odysseus and Menelaos have?

Chapter Fifty-Two

- Describe Arion’s character.
- What clues are there that Iphitos approves of Odysseus? Name at least three.
- Why does the writer stop the action at this point?

Chapter Fifty-Three

- Skotia meets Menelaos in the streets. What does he want her to do?
- The two of them see Phylas and Skotia realises something. What is it?
- Why can’t Skotia reach Odysseus? What does she do instead?
- What does Argos sense?

Chapter Fifty Four

- So much happens in this exciting chapter. Make a list of events in a flow chart or with bullet points.
- Retell the contest from Iphitos’s point of view.
- What was Arion feeling?
- Imagine the conversation between Skotia and her aunt Danae.
- Which bow do you think the title refers to?

Epilogue

- What does the word “epilogue” mean?
- Odysseus feels a great mix of emotions. Explain which of the events that have happened make him feel sad, relieved, incredibly happy, worried or horrified.
- Odysseus and Menelaos are leaving for Kyparissia early because of the wind. What do you guess Menelaos would rather be doing today?
- Did King Nestor back down on his promise? Explain.
- Throughout the book there is the worry of the war with Thyestes. Name two great contributions Odysseus has made to support his father, even though Odysseus hasn’t actually been fighting directly.
- Menelaos assumes that Odysseus is angry with him. How does Odysseus react to this?
- How does the last line of the book really sum up Odysseus?
- Neither Menelaos nor Odysseus get a girlfriend in this book. The author has shown us that not everything in life is “happily ever after”. There have been many victories. Which do you think was Odysseus’s greatest? What was his worst moment?