



THE ODYSSEY RETOLD AT AN INNER LONDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

The soundscape of inner London, traffic and I phones, feet pounding on pavements and bicycle tyres spinning over tarmac seems a long way from the ancient world and the wanderings of Odysseus but human nature does not change and nearly a hundred children sat spell bound listening to two storytellers bring Homer's epic to life in an inner London School at the end of May.

Hugh Lufton and Daniel Morden have retold the Iliad and the Odyssey for audiences all over the world and children from St Patrick's Catholic School in Kentish Town were delighted to be the latest people to hear Homer's words and images brought to life in their school.

They were joined by children from another local primary, Our Lady's in Camden. Three classes from the two schools sat in the new studio at St Patrick's as the two storytellers told them about the Gods and the Fates, about ancient Greek creation myths and having set the context about the adventures of Odysseus on his protracted journey home from the great war at Troy.

"It was so exciting" said one child afterwards. "I could really see the Cyclops and the great whirlpool. "I felt like I was there watching it," said another child, "after a few minutes it is like the storyteller disappears and you are just left with the story."

The staff were equally enthusiastic. "The children have absolutely loved this topic," said one teacher, "and it has done wonders for their speaking, listening and writing." Standards in writing particularly among the more academically challenged have risen as a result of the term's learning which the children have done about the myths.

Headteacher Sean Cranitch revealed that he had come across the storytellers and their work through Bob Lister and the Cambridge Classics project. He had seen Mr Lister give a presentation

about the use of Lufton and Morden's recordings of the Iliad and the Odyssey at a Classics in the Community conference in Oxford a year or more ago.

"I just thought it was a tremendous opportunity " said Mr Cranitch. "Storytelling as a way of inducting the young into the adult world is thousands of years old and the Greek stories carry more clues to the contrary behaviour that the children can expect to encounter as adults than any number of PSHCE lessons which are full of sensible people making sensible choices, rather than the messy reality of human experience which will confront our youngsters as they grow up."

"We are very grateful to the Hellenic Society" he continued "for subsidising this event and making it affordable for our youngsters."

After a whole day of storytelling and a journey in the imagination around the Mediterranean of thousands of years ago, the children were very happy and content.

One of them asked his teacher about the storytellers. "Do those men have children?" he said.

"Why do you ask?" answered the teacher.

"Because" said the boy, "it must be lovely to hear a story as wonderful as that when it is time for bed."

Report by Lisa Hallinan School Business Manager St Patrick's