

A Tiny Page Brings an Ancient Story Back

A researcher found a 1,700-year-old piece of The Odyssey tucked inside a Dutch library book.



A tiny old parchment scrap lies between the pages of an open library book.

A small, torn piece of parchment has turned a quiet Dutch **library** into a place of discovery. According to Live Science, researcher Mark de Kreij found words from The Odyssey. They were tucked among old Egyptian and Greek texts at Utrecht University library in the Netherlands.

Parchment is animal skin that people once used like paper. This piece is only about 2.6 by 3 inches. That is smaller than many sticky notes. It seems to come from a pocket-size copy made in Egypt around A.D. 300, about 1,700 years ago.

The Odyssey is a very old Greek poem about a **traveler** named Odysseus. For hundreds of years, people copied such stories by hand. A copy could be lost, torn, or reused. That makes even a tiny saved piece important.

Imagine opening an old book and finding a scrap between the pages. It might look brown, bent, and easy to miss. To most people, it could seem like trash. To someone who reads **ancient** Greek, the marks can be clues.

De Kreij was studying early Christian manuscripts, which are old handwritten documents. The library had bought the larger collection in the mid-1900s. He noticed that one small scrap held lines from Book 12, a section of The Odyssey.

That part of the story comes from a dangerous stop on Odysseus's **journey** home. The source says the lines describe the sun god Helios learning that

Odysseus’s men harmed his special cattle. The details matter because scholars compare copies. They look for small differences in words, **spelling**, and order.

The find also shows how history can hide in ordinary places. This piece was not found during a dig in sand. It was waiting in a library book. Live Science reports that only about 30 similar fragments are known.

Researchers do not yet know how the scrap reached that collection. That question is part of the work. A discovery can answer one question and open several new ones.

This is like finding one missing puzzle piece. It does not show the whole picture. But it proves the picture traveled far. A story first told long ago in Greek ended up in Egypt, then in a Dutch library, and now in the news.

Written from reporting by Live Science.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. What can make a very small object worth careful study?

2. Should libraries spend time checking old collections, even when most pages may not be famous?

3. If you found a mystery page in a school library book, what careful steps should come before calling it important?

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J C T Y G O T G T S H O
I O F R A G M E N T V M
E U U E A U N I A I Q L
L I T R T V G L N Y L L
D Y N N N T E E C E T I
N O N S P E L L I N G B
A T C L E G Y E E H R R
E L E U Z N X N N R N A
T C O R M I O N T R A R
B M T T N E A E T G L Y
L T S G J M N O E A P R
E O U A M E O T R B T I

ANCIENT

DOCUMENT

FRAGMENT

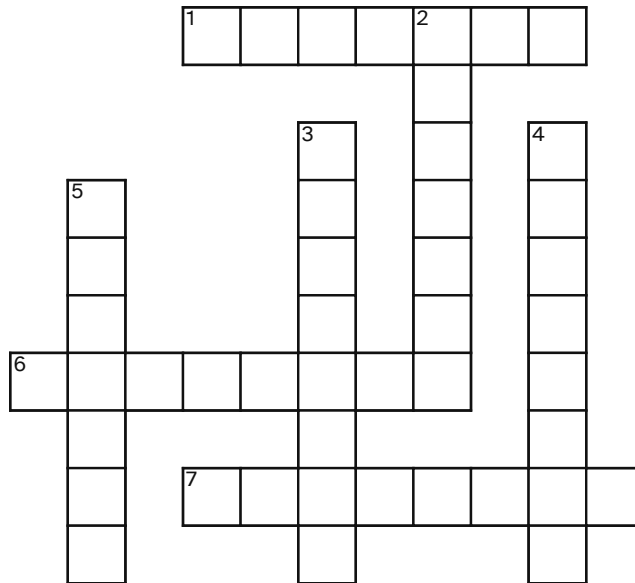
JOURNEY

LIBRARY

SPELLING

TRAVELER

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ACROSS

- 1 Place to borrow books and read
- 6 Small piece broken from something bigger
- 7 Way letters make a word

DOWN

- 2 From long, long ago
- 3 Person who goes from place to place
- 4 Written paper with information
- 5 Trip from one place to another

Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

Live Science

“1,700-year-old fragment of the 'Odyssey' discovered between pages of Dutch library book”

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<https://www.livescience.com/archaeology/1-700-year-old-fragment-of-the-odyssey-discovered-between-pages-of-dutch-library-book>

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article and its discussion questions, a word search, and a crossword.

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