
A Main Characteristics Of Odysseus And Telemachos

The Odyssey: Exploring the Heroic Traits of Telemachos and Odysseus

The Odyssey, written by Homer, follows the grueling obstacles that Odysseus and Telemachos go through in hopes of reuniting their family. Odysseus fights in the Trojan war for ten years, and he feels it is necessary to fight and overcome aggressive obstacles in order to return home to his long-awaited family. On the other hand, Telemachos' journey commences after he matures into a young and assertive adult, like a shadow of his sovereign father, Odysseus. Telemachos courageously fights the suitors to find his father and restore the throne to the rightful King of Ithaca. As Telemachos is at home trying to cover for Odysseus' absence and defend his father, Telemachos displays the heroic traits of courage and amiability. Similarly, as Odysseus battles the Cyclops, Polyphemus, and the angry suitors, Odysseus portrays the heroic trait of cunningness. The most prominent traits that define Odysseus as a "Hero" are endurance and cunningness, and Telemachos' most defining traits that help to characterize him as a "Hero" are admirability and courage. Because of Odysseus and Telemachos' brilliant portrayal of heroic traits, they are the most deserving of the status of "Hero."

Odysseus endures numerous obstacles that are in his way as he desperately tries to reach home to his family and beloved wife, Penelope. After Odysseus and his men finally decide to leave Circe, they go off to the house of Hades and awful Persephone to ask directions from Teiresias, the blind prophet. When Odysseus and his men arrived at the House of Hades, Odysseus encounters many souls of people he knows, including his mother, Anticleia. Odysseus says emotionally, "Then came the soul of my dead mother, Anticleia daughter of the brave Autolycus; she was alive when I left Ithaca on my voyage to sacred Ilion. My tears fell when I saw her, and I was moved with pity; but all at the same, I would not let her come near the blood before I had asked my questions of Teiresias" (125). In this heartfelt situation, Odysseus is forced to endure the sight of his dead mother, and he is unable to talk to her because if he lets any of the souls approach the blood, Teiresias will not show up and he will not tell Odysseus the path to reach Ithaca. Odysseus' endurance of his mother's soul allows him to reach Teiresias, which eventually leads him to his family and home in Ithaca. Odysseus has not seen his mother in years, and like any person who has not seen their family for a long time, he yearns to talk to her and spend time with his mother, but he has to be strong and endure the pain to save himself and his crewmen. Odysseus' portrays endurance in this difficult situation, a characteristic that allows Odysseus to finally reach Teiresias, his homeland, Ithaca, and reunite with his son and dear wife Penelope.

Odysseus in the House of Hades is not the only situation when his heroic trait of endurance shines. Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus enters his house as the suitors are eating dinner. As Odysseus enters, Antinoos, an arrogant suitor, says, "What bad luck has brought this nuisance to spoil our dinner? Just stand clear, will you, and get away from my table, or you may wish you were back again in Egypt or Cyprus! What a bold-faced shameless beggar it is! [...] You shan't leave this hall with a sound skin after that piece of rudeness!" (200). During this situation, the suitors, specifically Antinoos, are constantly taunting Odysseus, and right after doing so, Antinoos throws a foot stool at Odysseus' back. Odysseus endures the taunts and the pain

because he has to keep his disguise as a beggar if he wants to return home with his wife Penelope, and execute his plan of killing the suitors. Odysseus can easily kill Antinoos right on the spot, as he is powerful enough to do so, but he does not, because he chooses not to take any risks and Odysseus wants to be able to execute his plan of killing the suitors smoothly, so he can finally reunite with his family. In the past when Odysseus taunted Polyphemus instead of enduring Polyphemus' cruel words, Odysseus faced many obstacles thrown by Poseidon, and as a result he lives in the wrath of Poseidon. Now, because Odysseus has come so far and has so much at stake, Odysseus learns from his past mistakes and bears the cruel taunts and blows of the suitors, instead of acting rashly. Odysseus is wise enough to understand that his revenge on the suitors must to be executed cunningly, not rashly, so he endures all the pain that the suitors give him. Odysseus uses his endurance to eventually reach his home and peacefully reside with his family.

Even more importantly, Odysseus is a hero because he proves to be cunning throughout The Odyssey. Throughout Odysseus' journey, Odysseus is more than willing to act smartly and cunningly to reunite with his family. One situation when Odysseus proves to be cunning is when Odysseus and his men are captured by the Cyclops, Polyphemus, in his dark cave. When Odysseus and his men are trying to escape, they soon realize that the entrance of the cave is blocked by a huge stone, which no one can get past, except for Polyphemus himself. After the Cyclops leaves the cave for some time, Odysseus tells his men:

"Among all my schemes and machinations, the best plan I could think of was this. A long spar was lying beside the pen, a sapling of green olive-wood; Google-eye [Polyphemus] had cut it down to dry it and use as a staff. [...] They made it [the spar] smooth, then sharpened the end and charred it in the hot fire, and hid it carefully under the dung which lay in a great mass all over the floor. Then I told the others to cast lots who should help me with the pole and rub it into his eye while he was sound asleep. The lot fell on those four whom I would have chosen myself, which made five counting me" (106).

Odysseus possesses the heroic quality of cunningness because he immediately thinks on his feet and quickly devises a plan. Odysseus' overall plan is to skillfully fool Polyphemus, so Polyphemus removes the massive stone blocking the entrance. Odysseus takes advantage of the fact that Polyphemus is not in the cave and uses his resources such as the olive wood to achieve his goal. Odysseus immediately sees that there is a long heavy spar in the cave, and using it as a staff, he sharpens and smooths the spar and charres it in the fire, making it burning hot. Odysseus knows that he will not be able to overpower the Cyclops, so by taking advantage of the Cyclops' lack of intelligence, he forms this clever scheme. After using his resources and creating a dangerous weapon, Odysseus cleverly hides the spar in the dung so that Polyphemus will not notice it. Odysseus very smartly and cunningly later stabs the hot spar into the eye of the Cyclops, blinding him, thus enabling them to escape. While screeching in agony and pain, Polyphemus, unintentionally, pushes the stone from the entrance, from which Odysseus and his men run. Because of Odysseus' cunning plan and quick thinking, Polyphemus, with his own hands, allows Odysseus and his men to escape from his cruel wrath. Odysseus' cunningness and intelligence in an important tool that he uses to conquer his ultimate goal of reaching home to his long-awaited family. Odysseus' use of his intelligence is one of the most significant ways in which he proves to be a hero. Odysseus' cunning and intelligent plan to outwit Polyphemus is not the only time he proves to be a hero.

Odysseus demonstrates his cunningness when devising yet another plan, not to defeat

Polyphemus, but instead, to outwit the suitors and win back his house to restore his dignity in Ithaca. After Odysseus and Telemachos have an emotional reunion, Odysseus devises a plan to keep the suitors from marrying his wife Penelope and taking away his home. While explaining to Telemachos his clever plan, Odysseus says:

“But now, you must go home at dawn and mix with them [the suitors] all as usual; I will come later. The swineherd shall bring me like some wretched old beggar. [...] When Athena in her wisdom shall reveal to me that the time has come, I will give you a nod, so be on the look-out; then take away all the weapons and shields which hang about in the hall, and pack them into the corner of one of the rooms upstairs, every one, don't leave one behind. [...] Another thing you must be careful to remember; as you are my true son and my own flesh and blood, let not one single soul know that Odysseus has come home, not even Laertes, not the swineherd, not your mother herself” (186-187).

Odysseus devises a clever plan that would disguise him as a beggar, allowing him to sneak into his own house without anyone knowing who he actually is. Odysseus knows that he is no match against all of the suitors who have invaded his home and pestered his wife, so he makes use of his intelligence and cunningness and devises a foolproof plan, where he masks himself as someone he is not, just to restore the peace in his house and live happily with his family, whom he loves dearly. The Greek gods often take on the roles of other people through disguises as means of achieving what they want. Similarly, Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar to ensure that in the end, only he and Telemachos are armed and not the suitors. Then together, Odysseus and Telemachos defeat and kill the suitors and Odysseus is rightfully able to reside in his home. Odysseus' clever and intelligent thinking is what reunites him with his family. In any situation, Odysseus is a hero who best justifies the qualities of cunningness and intelligence.

In contrast with Odysseus, Telemachos is also a hero because he is admirable and respectful toward everyone. Telemachos calls for a meeting in the marketplace of Ithaca, and the suitors arrive with disdain for Odysseus' family. Eventually, the suitors scold Telemachos' mother for not marrying anyone, and they behave poorly in Odysseus' house. However, Telemachos still manages to treat the suitors with respect. While they are saying malicious things about their family, Telemachos chooses to respond by saying, “Let me be, my friends! leave me alone to be worn out of my bitter sorrow—unless I must suppose that my father Odysseus, my good father, was a cruel man and ill-treated the nation, and that is why you are cruel and ill-treat me, out of revenge—why you encourage these men” (23). Telemachos does not back talk to the rude suitors because he tries to portray as a better person compared to the unkind suitors. Almost everyone in Ithaca is at this meeting eagerly waiting to know what Penelope's fate will be. By gently refuting the suitors' claims about his mother by calling the suitors, his 'friends', Telemachos is shown to the people of Ithaca that he is a respectful man. In addition, Telemachos proves to the people of Ithaca that he is the result of good parenting from the wise Odysseus himself. While Telemachos tells the suitors to back off in the most respectable way he can, the people from the audience see a shadow of his father. The people of Ithaca are filled with respect and admirability for Odysseus' son, Telemachos because he acts diplomatically during a tense situation.

Even more importantly, Telemachos is able to admit his faults because of his amiability. After winning the arrow contest, Odysseus is unmasked from the beggar into his real self. The suitors notice that Odysseus is back, and they prepare to engage in battle. Next, Odysseus and Telemachos decide to fight the vengeful suitors, who swear they are going to kill Odysseus and

take over the house. However, the suitors lack weapons, and the only weapons that Odysseus possesses are his arrows. Telemachos manages to sneak up to the storage room, grabs weapons, and arms his people. In a rush, Telemachos forgets to close the storage room door on his way out. A suitor notices the open door and grabs weapons for the suitors themselves. Now the suitors are armed and they have more people fighting on their side. Telemachos does not try to conceal the fact that it was he who left the door open, instead he wholeheartedly apologizes: "O father! it is my fault— no one else to blame! I left the door of the storeroom open! And they had a better scout than I was![...]" (246). Telling his father the truth came at a significant cost to Telemachos. Odysseus is having his first battle with his grown up son, Telemachos. Odysseus might think that Telemachos is craven if Telemachos says that it is his fault that the suitors have weapons. Nevertheless, putting all risks aside, Telemachos chooses to tell his father the truth. By revealing the truth, Telemachos proves that he has matured into a fine young man because of his honesty. His amiability has been validated yet again because he cares about being loyal to those fighting along his side. Moreover, Telemachos feels that telling the truth would allow Odysseus and him to start searching for the culprit and resume their battle with the suitors. Telemachos is loyal to his father because he has a lot of admiration and respect toward Odysseus, as he proves in this situation.

Just as importantly, Telemachos is a hero because he proves to be courageous throughout *The Odyssey*. When the local beggar named Iros comes to the house of Odysseus, the suitors order a fight between the beggar Odysseus and Iros. Unfortunately, Odysseus the beggar hits Iros hard in the jaw, and Iros ends up bleeding. Iros attempts to back out, but the suitors force him to stay and fight. Normally the suitors are cruel and foolish, but they are also drunk and full from the feast. As a result, they end up causing a loud ruckus in the Odysseus' house. During this moment, Penelope walks down and she scolds her son, Telemachos, for not maintaining the house at its usual peaceful state. Telemachos responds by saying, "Mother dear, I can't be surprised that you are angry. I do notice everything, and I know quite well what is good and what is bad. I was only a child before. But I cannot think always of the right thing to do, for these men fairly daze me; here they sit, on this side and on that side, full of malice, and I have no one to help me" (208). Going up to his mother and telling her that he could not handle the racket being made took a lot of courage from Telemachos. Penelope just walked in, so she does not realize that this situation was out of Telemachos' hand. Furthermore, she feels that her son is not stepping up to the position. Yet Telemachos still chooses to corroborate the situation at hand to his mother. Telemachos explains that Iros is being forced to fight with Odysseus because of the suitors who are acting like bullies. Telemachos could have easily chosen to reprimand his anger at the suitors to his mother, but he chooses to patiently explain what's happening. By telling his mom that he is not a robot who will always know what the right thing to do is, he is coming into terms with reality. Telemachos is banking on the fact that the gods will choose to help Odysseus and Telemachos fight the many suitors. When he explains to his mom that he has 'no one to help me', he is realizing that this battle may not go in the favor of the House of Odysseus. Admitting his weakness to his mother takes guts, but choosing to see what the other possible outcomes of this battle could be takes courage, a quality that Telemachos clearly justifies in this situation.

Even more importantly, Telemachos courageously fights for his family. When Telemachos calls for a meeting in the town square, many a suitors are protesting. The suitors complain that Penelope has deceived them by claiming she must finish knitting a weave before getting married. Penelope keeps this up for three years, and the suitors finally find out her excuse is fake. The suitor Antinoos is particularly mad and issues an ultimatum: to either get rid of

Penelope, or to force her to marry a suitor. The other suitors grin in agreement, but Telemachos has something to say: "Antinoos, it is impossible for me to turn out of doors the mother who bore me and brought me up; my father is somewhere in the world, alive or dead, and it is a hard thing for me to pay back all the dowry to Icarios, if I send away my mother of my own will" (25). Telemachos courageously stands up to the particularly rude suitor, Antinoos and says that his mother's matrimonial issues were none of his business. Telemachos is going through some difficult times in his life because he is scared that his father may never return home, and he is also scared that the suitors might take mom and the throne. Nevertheless, Telemachos arranges to talk to the suitors in the market-place. Telemachos does not rage at Antinoos, after he says crude words about his family, instead he gently explained to Antinoos that his family cannot afford the dowry. Telemachos proves that he has the courage to rise up in tough situations and that adversity does not stop him from courageously fighting for his family; in fact the adversity helps Telemachos become a more stronger and better person.

Odysseus and Telemachos' incredible journey help to define their heroic traits of endurance, cunningness, admirability, and courage. When Odysseus devises a devious plan to outsmart the Cyclops and executes yet another plan to outwit the suitors, Odysseus proves his cunningness. When Odysseus painfully watches the soul of his dead mother in the Underworld and when he bears the grueling taunts of the suitors he justifies his quality of endurance. In contrast, Telemachos proves to be admirable and respectable when he calmly and maturely converses with the angry suitors, and when he honestly tells his father the truth about the mistake he made. Telemachos also proves to be courageous when he talks to his mother Penelope, and when he stands up to the suitors. These commendable heroic traits are not only in Greek gods such as Zeus and Athena, but also among the fellow people, the ordinary mortal beings. Odysseus and Telemachos, through their heroism and admirable journey, remind the readers that ordinary humans that work hard to achieve their goals by surpassing obstacles are considered heroes in their own way.æ