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English 231-02

Odyssey Research Essay

Abstract

This Hero's Journey was never an easy one. This journey was a very hard one indeed. It was much of a struggle, few losses, heartaches, pain, and growth. Odysseus's journey took 20 years to accomplish and throughout it he faced many trials, showing how great heroes are made up of those trials in life. Throughout the *Odyssey* written by Homer, Odysseus comes home to Ithaca and throughout the journey, he gains qualities of an epic hero by facing and overcoming a lot of challenges. His journey consists of 6 parts: Leaving Home, Deciding on a Quest, Encountering Dragons, The All Out Struggle, Wounded by the Fight, and The Great Wisdom.

After leaving Troy, Odysseus and his men arrive at the island of the Lotus-Eaters. Odysseus sent his men out to find food and they begin to eat the Lotus Flowers. Odysseus had to drag them back to the ships so they can continue their journey home. Afterwards, Odysseus and his men land on the island of the Cicones to raid it for supplies but the Cicones retaliate and kill 72 of Odysseus' men. This was a huge blow to Odysseus. While still on the island of the Cicones, Odysseus and his men came across a Cyclops cave and is lured in by the wine and cheese. His crew had been hungry. Polyphemus, the Cyclops, traps them inside the cave and kill several of Odysseus' men, another big blow to Odysseus. Odysseus ends up blinding Polyphemus while his men sneak out under sheep and Polyphemus calls upon Poseidon, his father, to not let Odysseus to return home.

Odysseus and his few remaining men come across an island floating above the sea with a steep cliff and a bronze palace on top. They came across the island of Aeolia, home of the god, Aeolus, the god of wind. Aeolus gives Odysseus all the bad winds so they can return safely home. Odysseus' men get curious and go against his orders of not touching the bag and ends up releasing the bad winds. These winds sends them to unknown waters and they are lost at sea.

Odysseus and his men came across a race of powerful giants whose king, Antiphates, and queen decide to turn Odysseus' scouts into dinner. Odysseus and his men flee for their ships but the giants throw boulders at the ships. Only Odysseus' ship gets away. Odysseus and his men reach the island of Circe and split into two groups. Eurylochus and his group of twenty-two men hear singing coming from Circe's house and enter her home. Circe turns the men of this group into pigs and only Eurylochus escapes to report it to Odysseus.

Still on the island of Circe, Odysseus goes off by himself and meets the god Hermes, who is disguised as a young man, who gives him a magic herb that can protect him from Circe's magic. Odysseus confronts Circe and when she uses her magic on him, it doesn't work. Circe then asks Odysseus to stay with her which makes Odysseus real suspicious. Odysseus makes Circe take an oath to not harm him. Circe eventually turns Odysseus' men back to normal and they stay on Circe's island for a year.

Odysseus travels to the land of the dead, guided by Circe's instructions, to seek advice of the prophet Teiresias. Teiresias tells Odysseus 3 things: stay away from the cattle of Helios, make a sacrifice to Poseidon and he will have a peaceful old age. Before leaving the Land of the Dead, Odysseus talks to his mom, people he fought with in the war, and Agamemnon and Achilles. Agamemnon, who was killed by his wife, gives Odysseus advice about women and Achilles tells him that life is better than death. After talking, he fears the Gorgon monster and rushes back to his ship. After leaving the Land of the Dead, Odysseus returns to the island of Circe to retrieve his men and prepare themselves to make their way past the Sirens in which Circe had warned them about. Odysseus puts beeswax into the ears of his men to keep them from hearing the Sirens' dangerous song, while Odysseus is tied securely to the mast so he can hear the song of the Sirens. They pass by safely and lose no one.

The next objective Odysseus and his men must overcome is getting past Scylla and Charybdis. Circe advised Odysseus to cling to the walls near Scylla and lose six of his men rather than risking his whole ship to Charybdis. She advised him to sail as quickly as possible rather than trying to fight Scylla. Odysseus is not happy about this because he would rather not lose any of his men but Circe practically tells him to suck it up and play it safe. Odysseus does this and they get past, but also losing six of his men.

Next, Odysseus and his men comes to Thrinacia, the island of the Sun, Helios. Odysseus wants to avoid it completely but Eurylochus insists they need to stop there to rest. They are kept there for a month because of a storm and for a while they are able to survive on the provisions of the ship, but when they run out Eurylochus convinces the other men to disobey Odysseus' orders and they slaughter the cattle of Helios. Odysseus was sleeping the entire time and when Helios finds out, he has Zeus destroy their ship. Odysseus ends up drifting on the sea without any of his men left and is brought to Ogygia, the island of Calypso. Calypso, a nymph, keeps him on her island for years and years, but all Odysseus wants is to go home. Calypso offers Odysseus eternal life, but he refuses and is still miserable. Hermes is sent to the island to help Odysseus and to convince Calypso to let him go. Calypso eventually agrees and Odysseus is able to build a boat and set off for home once again. Poseidon, seeing Odysseus at sea again, is furious and brings a violent storm and down on Odysseus and his boat is destroyed. Odysseus drifts to the island of the Phaeacians and is found by the daughter of Alcinous and Arete, Nausicaa. Odysseus is able to talk to Alcinous and Alcinous agrees to help him get home. The Phaeacians take Odysseus home to Ithaca and on their way back, they and their ship are turned to stone by Zeus to punish them for helping Odysseus return home.

After 10 years at war, and 10 years of traveling home, Odysseus is finally home at Ithaca but before he can officially return to his house, he must kick the suitors out. With Athena's help, Odysseus, disguised as an old man from Crete, is able to infiltrate his own home and participate in a shooting challenge that his wife, Penelope came up with, and he wins his wife back. Odysseus is finally free at home with his wife, Penelope, and son, Telemachus. Odysseus was determined to get home and he did just that after a long twenty years. A true hero in my eyes. This was a great epic and my favorite so far in this class this semester!

References

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odyssey>

<https://youtu.be/MS4jk5kavy4>