

Olivia Hough

Mrs. Parker

English 4

11 November 2022

Odysseus' Journey

One of the two major ancient Greek poems attributed to Homer, *The Odyssey* is one of the oldest extant works of literature that is still widely read today. In the epic novel, *The Odyssey*, Homer uses characterization and the settings of both his journey and his home itself to reveal Odysseus' development as a leader to his men and to his family.

It is clear that Odysseus is a hero, but this does not mean that he always had the characteristics of a leader. For instance, he did not inspire the trust of his men like a respectable leader should. His men think that he has lied to them about the sack of winds that Aeolus gave him. "See what fine prizes he is taking home from Troy, while we, who have travelled just as far as he has, come back with hands as empty as we set out with-and now Aeolus has given him ever so much more. Quick-let us see what it all is, and how much gold and silver there is in the sack he gave him. Thus they talked and evil counsels prevailed. They loosed the sack, whereupon the wind flew howling forth and raised a storm that carried us weeping out to the sea and away from our own country." (Homer 53). As a result, they were prolonged in their journey back to Ithaca, because they had little trust in Odysseus. Furthermore, we see that Odysseus was not a very involved leader. Instead of going to the house of Circe, he divided his men up and appointed a different leader rather than himself to go with his men and see what they could discover. "So I divided them into two companies and set a captain over each; I gave one company to Eurylochus, while I took command of the other myself. Then we cast lots in our helmet, and the

lot fell upon Eurylochus; so he set out with his twenty-two men, and they wept, as also did we who were left behind.” (Homer 55). From this we see the lack of authority Odysseus had when it came to discovering the house of Circe, but we later see him come back into the authority role after he rescues his men and then eventually sails off towards Hades.

After Homer tells us the rest of the troubles and hardship Odysseus and his crew go through, the author tells us how Zeus decides to punish Odysseus and creates a storm. The storm destroys the ship and sends what crew Odysseus has left into death beneath the waves. We find Odysseus as the only survivor and he ends up on the beautiful Ogygian island, with the goddess Calypso. She makes Odysseus her sex slave and forces him to stay with her. While Odysseus is trapped, he spends his days weeping on the rocks by the sea-shore. Holmer writes that Calypso “found him sitting upon the beach with his eyes ever filled with tears, and dying of sheer homesickness; for he had got tired of Calypso, and though he was forced to sleep with her in the cave at night, it was she, not he, that would have it so. As for the day time, he spent it on the rocks and on the sea-shore, weeping, crying aloud for his despair, and always looking out upon the sea.” (Homer 28). This is important because Homer shows us that Odysseus was not enjoying his time with Calypso and being on her lush island. Instead, Odysseus would sit by the sea longing to go back to his home on Ithaca and see his family. Moreover, we do see Calypso release Odysseus, but his journey has only just begun. Therefore, if it wasn't for Zeus storm, Odysseus as a character would have never started his change from the boor leader into a respectable leader and husband of a household.

Homer uses events at home, as well as during the journey to demonstrate Odysseus' development into a strong, wise leader. His personality change is illustrated when he remains disguised as a beggar while all the suitors are making fun of him. “Then Antinous said, ‘What

god can have sent such a pestilence to plague us during our dinner? Get out, into the open part of the court, or I will give you Egypt and Cyprus over again for your insolence and importunity; you have begged of all of the others.” (Homer 97). This quote demonstrates that even though he was being treated poorly by the suitors and demanded to leave his own house, he never loses his head and gets angry. Odysseus remains very calm and collected while talking to Antinous before he leaves, then he waits for the right time to kill off the suitors and servants. In addition to his wise decisions making, he is also very clever in how he goes about killing the suitors. After he strings the first arrow through all twelve axes, he then grabs another arrow before the others have time to process what he is doing and Odysseus kills Antinous. “The arrow struck Antinous in the throat, and the point went clean through his neck, so that he fell over and the cup dropped from his hand, while a thick stream of blood gushed from his nostrils. He kicked the table from him and upset the things on it, so that the bread and roasted meats were all soiled as they fell over on the ground.” (Homer 122). From this we see that Odysseus had a plan when it came to killing the suitors. He started with the one who had more authority then slayed the rest.

In conclusion, Holmer, in his interpretation of Odysseus, transforms him from his arrogant and egotistical leader character to that of a wise and compassionate father who is responsible for protecting the household that he governs again.