

Qualities of a hero and odysseus

Business



A hero is someone who demonstrates substantial quantities of courage or outstanding achievements and is recognized for their positive impact on society. A heroic person is someone who can aid in the time of need and comfort others in times of distress.

A current day example of a hero is Captain Chesley Sullenberger. He saved the lives of 155 passengers after he was forced to crash-land his plane into the Hudson River. He made sure he was the last individual to exit the aircraft even though water was rushing into the cabin. For someone to be a hero, there is no physical limitations that makes it necessary to be strong and wear a cape with tights because heroes are judged by their actions and nothing more. Qualities that I associate with a hero are vigilant, selfless, and the willingness to take risks. Homer from the *Odyssey* suggests that Odysseus is made a hero by exemplifying qualities of being audacious, savior, and sly.

However, the characteristics that Homer equates with Odysseus are not always required for someone to be considered a hero. In Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*, audacious is a quality that makes Odysseus heroic. The act of being audacious is the willingness to take surprisingly bold risks, which Odysseus demonstrates in his adventures. In the *Adventure of the Cyclopes*, Odysseus states that " we climbed, then, briskly to the cave. But Kyklops had gone afield, to pasture his fat sheep, so we looked round at everything inside" (IX, 232-234).

This is an example of being audacious because Odysseus and his crew are unaware of the contents inside the Cyclopes' cave and entering his habitants

without any signal to the “louts” (IX, 114). Odysseus is taking on a big risk because from what Homer tells us, the Cyclopes are uncivilized giants and can be very unpredictable. Entering into the cave without permission might have been a risk that got Odysseus into trouble later because the Cyclopes started feasting on his crew. As a result, Odysseus plans to stab the Cyclopes’ only eye with the pike of an olive tree. “Straight forward they sprinted, lifting it, and rammed it deep in his crater eye” (IX, 414-415).

This was a considerably huge risk because Odysseus was conscious of what the Cyclopes is capable of and if his plan didn’t succeed, it would most likely leave him and the rest of his crew in the stomach of the Cyclopes. Another example of Odysseus’ audacious acts occurs when Circe turns his crew into swine. Eurylokhos tells Odysseus, “Oh, leave me here! You, even you, cannot return, I know it, I know you cannot bring away our shipmates better make sail with these men, quickly too, and save ourselves from horror while we may” (X, 292-296). Eurylokhos tells Odysseus that it is too dangerous to save his crew, but Odysseus takes the risk to stop Circe from prevailing. With the help of Hermes, and the root that he supplies Odysseus with, Odysseus was able to defeat Circe and save his crew from being turned into swine. These examples of audacious behaviors prove that Odysseus is heroic because he does not hesitate to take a risk, no matter the consequences or struggle that he may endure.

The willingness to take risks is consistent among all heroes, not only Odysseus because risk taking is what helps express their other qualities such as savior and sly. Homer introduces the idea of Odysseus being a savior, which supports his heroism. In the adventure of the Lotos Eaters, Odysseus

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saves the three men that he selected to learn about the people on the island, from staying on the island of the Lotos Eaters and not going home. After the men ate the Lotus flower “ they longed to stay forever, browsing on that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland” (IX, 103-104). Odysseus expresses himself as being a savior when he guides them back to the ship and ties them down under their rowing benches.

Odysseus then tells his crew to refrain from eating the Lotos “ or you lose your hope of home” (IX, 109). A savior, being a person who saves someone from danger, clearly depicts what Odysseus did in this adventure. If he wouldn't have tied the three men to boat, they would most likely still be on the island not knowing their purpose and most importantly forgetting about home. Odysseus shows another example of being a savior when he plans to tie his crew members under the Cyclopes' sheep in attempt to escape the cave. His thoughts are brought to life when he says “ I tied them silently together, twining cords of willow from the ogre's bed; then slung a man under each middle one to ride there safely, shielded left and right” (IX, 466-469). This was an ingenious idea since the Cyclopes did not even consider that Odysseus and his crew were hidden underneath his own sheep.

Odysseus' great thinking skills are what allowed the crew to safely exit the cave. This example is a good demonstration of Odysseus' savior because he helps rescue his crew from the Cyclopes that was going to eat the rest of them, which would have happened if he did not save his crew and himself in time. Being a savior is a quality that all heroes, including Odysseus, express and allow them to bring benefit to those in need of it. Odysseus knew that his crew, including himself were in trouble, so he used his cleverness to save

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them from being indulged by the Cyclopes. All good heroes try to save people and are judged on their actions of saving and therefore it is a quality that is required for heroes to be helpful.

In addition to showing that Odysseus is audacious and a savior, Homer also suggests that Odysseus' slyness makes him heroic. Odysseus demonstrates this quality when he agrees that he is a beggar after Telemakhos tells the swineherd to "lead this poor man down to beg" (XVII, 12). Telemakhos does not know that he is talking to his father, because he has not seen Odysseus since he was child and has no memory of a father. Odysseus decides to remain silent and from this point on he is disguised as a beggar versus the King of Ithaca. To be sly is to be misleading and Odysseus demonstrates this by convincing everybody that he is a beggar man and dodges from telling Telemakhos that he is his father.

Odysseus shows examples of being sly when he tells the Cyclopes that "my name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends, everyone calls me Nohbdy" (IX, 397 - 298). He is being sly because he is hiding who he really is and misleading the Cyclopes to think that he is nothing by calling himself "Nobody." This is rather ironic because Odysseus is everything but nobody. Homer suggests that being sly makes Odysseus heroic because he is trying to hide his identity from the Cyclopes so he can not curse him, but because of his hubris, he later uncovers his true identity. He is also a hero because he is undercover from his friends and family and therefore shows that he can think rapidly and thoroughly at any given situation like most heroes do when they help someone, for example, escape from a train track after falling in.

However, sly is not the first thing somebody thinks about when they see a hero. A hero can be sly, but it is not required because someone can be purely truthful and not hide anything and still be a hero. Odysseus being sly, is just an addition to his heroism that is not found in all heroes. Homer has influenced my understanding of a hero and what it means to be heroic in *The Odyssey* by exposing me to a heroic figure that demonstrates slyness and is considered a hero. Before reading *The Odyssey*, I would not have even thought about a hero trying to mislead someone. However, Odysseus manages to be a hero with sly qualities without diminishing his heroic standings.

Prior to reading this epic poem, I thought that all heroes were truthful for the most part, but Homer proves me wrong with the examples I supplied about Odysseus being sly. Odysseus uses his slyness to hide from being cursed by the Cyclopes and leads his friends and family to thinking he is a beggar man. In conclusion, Homer suggests that the qualities of audacious, savior, and sly make Odysseus heroic and establish the character of who he is in *The Odyssey*.