

Telemachus: the true hero of the odyssey



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In The Odyssey, the reader is easily able to distinguish that Odysseus is a hero in the story.

He is a god-like figure. Odysseus's wife, Penelope, is a hero and seen by many readers as such especially females. Both possess characteristics of heroes and they deserve to be considered such but that does not mean that they are the true hero of the story. Their son Telemachus is the true hero in The Odyssey. The reader should be able to identify with him the most and realize everything that has happened in his life and he deals with it with extreme heroism. He handles the situation in his life the way every human being should.

Majority of my classmates will argue that either Odysseus or Penelope is the true hero of the story. Most of the men in my class will argue that Odysseus has all the characteristics of what a true hero. Odysseus is the stereotypical hero. He is the man that every man wants to be and the man every woman wants to be with.

He has conquered every enemy, beast and monster that he has faced during his lifetime. He is stronger than all other men. The soul of Amphimedon reveals to the readers " No one of us was able to stretch out the string Of the mighty bow, for we were too weak by. But when the great bow came into Odysseus's hands... Then godly Odysseus, who had endured much, took it in his hands, Easily strung the bow and shot through the iron. " (Homer 257) Odysseus was stronger than any of the best men the world could offer. All of the suitors that tried to persuade Penelope to marry them were unable to use the bow and only the mighty Odysseus was able to do it.

They would argue that there is nothing that Odysseus has not done or could not do. He is the definition of a hero, he is not only exceptional at everything he does, he is the best at everything he does. I would be wasting your time if I even attempted to argue that Odysseus is not a hero. There is a difference between a hero and a true hero. The true hero is a role model to other human beings and Odysseus does not fit into that category. He commits adultery numerous times.

A man that cheats on his wife as often as Odysseus should not be considered a true hero. Odysseus returns home to Ithaca by himself which make one wonder what happened to the rest of the men that started out of the voyage with. How could you call Odysseus a true hero when he only saves his own life? He did go off to war and fight for his country but that was what he had to do. Did Odysseus have to kill all the suitors? The suitors did not deserve death for their actions and are the readers to believe that the suitors would not have listened to Odysseus if he told them to leave.

The suitors were only there because they wanted to marry Penelope and take Odysseus throne. That became impossible when Odysseus returned. Odysseus was a great man and a god like figure but he lacked the morals and the true qualities to even be an exceptional man let alone a true hero. Odysseus and his superior skills compared to Telemachus would have been unable to handle the situations and problems that Telemachus has to deal with.

Most of the ladies in my class will state that Penelope is the true hero in the play. She does everything in her power to prevent other men from seizing

her husband's throne. She uses her mind to outsmart the suitors who want to marry her. She stays loyal to her husband for more than twenty years.

Penelope has just as many chances to cheat on Odysseus as Odysseus has to cheat on her but she choose to do the noble, heroic and thing and remains faithful. She does things that would not be expected from a woman in those times. They would say that because Penelope had to deal with the fact that her husband was gone for twenty years and she had to raise her son alone. Penelope had to keep many men astray for many years to prevent one of them from grasping Odysseus throne.

She ruled as a king without the official power and recognition of the king. It is obvious that Penelope is a hero. She is a strong woman, a strong leader and should be considered a hero by all that read the Odyssey or other stories about the Odyssey but Penelope was not as pure and as innocent as many people would like to believe. Penelope was able to keep Odysseus's land from the suitors through deceitful acts.

Was she making the shroud for herself instead of for Laertes? " It was a shawl she made, something warm a man might wrap around her shoulders windy nights one of the suitors perhaps. " (Pastan 264) Penelope lived in a time where women could not rule as a king. Ithaca needed a king and for twenty years they were without a king because of Penelope selfish choices. The right thing for Penelope to do was to marry one of the suitors because one of the suitors would have become king and would have been able to rule Ithaca with all of the authority and power of a king. This was a sacrifice that Penelope was unwilling to make because she liked the power to much.

She did not remarry because she wanted to rule Ithaca. Penelope did not want Odysseus to return because then she would be the ruler and nobody would be able to tell her what to do. When Odysseus returns home from his long journey she does not even seem happy to see him. Odysseus says to Penelope “ Things back where habit said they belonged: your own husband lying in your bed ...Yet you had to leave it.

”(Howard 262) Instead of being over joyous that her husband has finally returned home and showing him how much she loves him, she decides it is best if she leave his side the first night he is home while he is sleeping. Penelope also liked all the attention that all the suitors gave her. If she finished the shroud then she would have had only one man praising her and complementing her. Penelope is a strong women and a hero but that does not make her a true hero. Penelope could not even bear the problems that Telemachus has to.

Telemachus has to deal with more than any other character from the Odyssey. Telemachus has to live his life in the shadow of his father. Everything that he will do his father has already done. In a poem about Telemachus “ You will find, you father has been there before you,..

In another part you will find his image in a mud phallic god. ”(Dickey 266) Dickey is talking about how that Telemachus will always be falling in his father’s footsteps. No matter what he does his father has already done it. “ Out of remembering, they will take you to their bed where he has been before you. It is hard to image a place he has not been. ”(Dickey 266) The

author hammers home the point that everywhere Telemachus can possibly go his father has already been there before.

The burden that Telemachus has to deal with would be unbearable for any other person. It is not often that a man like Odysseus comes around and to always live up to his standards would drive the average man crazy.

Telemachus deals with it in stride. He does not become overwhelmed by his situation but actually thrives in it. People will always compare Telemachus to Odysseus.

They wanted Telemachus to be the next Odysseus and anything less would be a failure. “ He is constantly being compared to his father, which is unfair due to his age and the fact his father is a legendary hero loved by many. ” (Hanabergh 2) Men of Odysseus caliber do not come around often and to live in that shadow must have been unbearable. Telemachus bravery and thriving in such a role is not the only reason he is the true hero. Telemachus has to live his life without his father. He lacks a male figure in his life to follow and to help deal with the troubles and problems that come with manhood.

He has to live his teenage years and usually the most difficult for a boy without his father. His father was one of the greatest heroes in the history of Ithaca and was not there to show him how to fill his shoes. His father was not able to show how to be a leader, a warrior and a king. Telemachus had to learn everything from his mother and on his own. There is only so much that Penelope could do for Telemachus. He had to learn so much on his own and had to pave his own way.

Telemachus is also a good son. He respects his mother's wishes and does not attack the suitors on his own. He lets his mother make her own decisions and does not force his will upon her. " He abides by her wishes that none be harmed and lets her do her own thing. Sometimes in situations like this the hardest possible thing to do is to sit on the side and just watch everything happen. " (Bayne 2) Telemachus is wise enough to understand and respect his mother's wishes.

Of course many people will disagree with the fact that Telemachus is the true hero. Some readers of this will argue that Telemachus deals with tough situation but he does not do anything that makes him a hero. Telemachus was put in the worst situation that any son can be put in. He has to follow in the footsteps of one of the greatest men to ever grace the face of the planet and he had to do this without that man in his life and without a male figure in his life.

That alone is heroic. That is a far greater accomplishment than being able to conquer ones enemies. He had to deal with more than just outside conflict but also inner turmoil. Other people will argue that if Odysseus is such a great man and such a great hero how is it possible that Telemachus is a better hero than him. Telemachus reveals " I never wish for my father's life nor have I any idea what he sacrificed. " (Gluck 268) This is a valid point but Odysseus chose his life.

He had control over most of the occurrences in his life. Telemachus life was forced upon him. He did not have a choice in what went on with his life.

Odysseus knew what he was facing and there is no way Telemachus could figure out what challenges he would face.

Other readers will argue that Penelope was a woman before her times and a role model for all women. She is a great woman and one that should be admired but the ways she handles certain situations is very poorly. Penelope lacked some of the essential qualities that are required to be a true hero. True heroes are not selfish nor are they treacherous.

The Odyssey contains three heroes and the reason for their heroism is very different. Any reader of The Odysseys should recognize Odysseus, Penelope and Telemachus as heroes. Telemachus overcomes the most adversity. Telemachus also saves Penelope from the suitors with the help from Odysseus and he helps bring his father back to Ithaca. He is the savior to the other two heroes in this story.

The reason it matters that Telemachus is the true hero because you do not need to be the strongest, toughest or smartest to be the true hero.

Telemachus is not as strong as Odysseus or as smart as Penelope but he proves that he is more heroic. Telemachus is the true hero because it is hard to envision any of the other characters being able to handle the difficulties that Telemachus faces with as much grace and ease as he does. Works Cited
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