

Divine intervention in "the odyssey" essay sample

[Religion](#), [God](#)



The divine intervention of the gods in human affairs is a familiar aspect in the epic poem, *The Odyssey* by Homer. Throughout the first five books of the tale, there are several occurrences where gods interfere in the lives of both Odysseus and his son. Sometimes these interferences are to push forwards Odysseus' nostros, for example Athena encouraging of the possibilities of his father being alive and to go out and find him; however Poseidon, Odysseus' divine antagonist strives in the opposite direction, trying to prevent Odysseus from ever returning home. Ultimately all of the involvement from the gods in some way focuses around Odysseus and his homeward voyage.

In the first book Athena introduces the idea of divine intervention when she gets Zeus' consent to travel to Ithaka to speak to " my own heart is broken for Odysseus,/ the master mind of war, so long a castaway/ upon an island in the running sea/"|His daughter will not let Odysseus go,/ poor mournful man; she keeps on coaxing him/ with her beguiling talk, to turn his mind/ from Ithaka" (67-77) She speaks with sympathy about Odysseus predicament, because she is the goddess of battle and wisdom she a natural liking for the brave and clever Odysseus. " I shall visit Ithaka/ to put more courage in the son, and rouse him/ to call an assembly of the islanders" (113-5) Arriving in Ithaka she assumes the form of Odysseus's old friend Mentos. Athena speaks in a muted prophecy and in human disguise because she cannot just appear in all her divine glory and tell that her father is still alive. She convinces to set sail and search for his father. With the support of Athena, finally learns to takes some initiative and he calls an assembly, and embarks on a journey to find his father and finally bring him home. In addition to the physical journey

he will be taking, he is also embarking on a metaphorical journey into manhood to preserve his father estate.

Divine intervention is taken to a further level in the following book, where Athena forms the disguise of two more people; another one of Odysseus' old friends Mentor, and himself. While disguising herself as Mentor she delivers a very motivational speech to about the greatness of his father and foresees a fruitful journey ahead. Athena maintains quite an influential grasp on until she realizes that he is indeed going to embark on this journey and then she disguises herself as and goes into town to collect a loyal crew to man his ship. " she roamed the town/ taking each likely man aside and telling him:/ " meet us at nightfall at the ship!" (407-9) Athena has now become quite actively involved in seeing that sets out to find his father she even goes so far to assembling his crew. Never again in the following books does a god go so far as physically helping a mortal to this extent, where they simply point them in the proper direction and let them figure the rest out on their own. " Reason and heart will give you words, ;/ and a spirit will counsel others.

I should say/ the gods were never indifferent to your life." (31-3) Since Odysseus is the one who is on the real journey, by helping out , Athena is indirectly furthering his return home without interfering with Odysseus's learning experience from his expedition. She later reveals her divinity by shedding the form of Mentor and changing into an eagle staying behind to protect ' s ship and its crew. " If grey-eyed Athena loved you/ the way she did Odysseys in the old days" ; never have I seen the gods help any man/ as openly as Athena did your father"(235-9) In the previous chapters of the

Iliad, the god Poseidon had developed some resentment for Odysseus in the battles of Troy. " Poseidon, bears the fighter an old grudge/ since he poked out the eye of Naturally, the god, after the blinding" mind you, he does not kill the man; he only buffets him away from home" (90-9) Poseidon keeps Odysseus trapped on the island with Kalypso, but we do not see Poseidon actively preventing his homecoming until after Odysseus escapes from the island. After Odysseus has spent eighteen days at sea, Poseidon is returning home from a trip to the land of the Ethiopians, when he comes across what his fellow gods have done in his absence. He stirs up a storm, which nearly swallows Odysseus under the sea. This shipwreck delays his freedom from exile, but the goddess Ino comes to his rescue and gives him a veil that keeps him safe after his ship is destroyed.

Athena is bothered that Poseidon is preventing Odysseus return home, and she sees this as unjust and tries to do everything in her power to set this straight. While discussing Odysseus's fate in the divine assemblies, she continuously complains of the unfairness that Odysseus is trapped on the island, and begs Zeus for justice. Zeus just reminds her that it is in the divine plan Odysseus is to return home, and it is only Poseidon that is preventing this return. " Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus,/ all but Poseidon" (31-2) Athena delivers a speech in favour of the hero Odysseus and prevails on Zeus to intervene. He sends his messenger to go to Kalypso's island and get her to set Odysseus free. " send him back in haste./ His life may not in exile go to waste./His destiny, his homecoming, is at hand" (119-21) Kalypso finally frees Odysseus, and points him in the right direction to an escape. She provides him with the idea of making a raft and provides food supply, but

she never physically helps him in his escape. This is for the reason that he has to learn on his journey by experience, without this factor the events mean nothing. Through learning on his own, he is gaining knowledge to assert and preserve his own humanity.

The nature of divine intervention throughout to the first five books is in some way related to Odysseus' nostros. All of the gods, excluding Poseidon are intervening in his life according to the divine plan and what his fate entails. He is destined to reach home eventually, and it isn't until Poseidon is brought to justice that he will do so. Without Athena's positive influence in the greater scheme of things and her intervention in the affairs of and Odysseus, his homecoming would only be further delayed.