

Essay on the odyssey: the role of gods' intervention in odysseus' journey

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



In Homer's *The Odyssey*, the Greek Gods interfere with the citizens from Ithaca on a daily basis, majorly affecting and changing their lives.

Throughout *The Odyssey*, Greek Gods use their significant power to their advantage. The Greek Gods' interventions are either rewarding or punishing to the Citizens of Ithaca, depending on if their actions are positive or negative. In Homer's *The Odyssey*, godly intervention generally occurs as a response to Odysseus's actions, whether it is rewarding Odysseus after a positive action or punishing him after a negative action, which illustrates that Odysseus's character was inconsistent between good leadership and bad leadership.

The first example of God's intervention, as a response to Odysseus's positive actions comes when he finally, successfully returns home to Ithaca and greets his wife Penelope. Penelope being her cunning self, is eavesdropping on all of the uproar in the great hall. Athena now inspires her to set a challenge that only Odysseus can complete. Athena's guidance that she offers to Penelope, as she portrays god intervention, demonstrates that Athena is rewarding Odysseus for his good leadership as he completes his journey and brings all his men back to Ithaca. The moment Odysseus sounds the string of the bow, Zeus sends a thunderbolt crashing across the sky just as the suitors are in disbelief that Odysseus strung the bow and shot an arrow through 12 axes. As the narrator in the *Odyssey* explains how simple of a task this was for Odysseus, he goes on to say " Like an expert singer skilled at lyre and song who strains a string to a new peg with ease, making the pliant sheep-gut fast at either end so with his virtuoso ease Odysseus strung his mighty bow." Athena, the god of war, favors and rewards

Odysseus for his good leadership and for finally returning home. Athena rewards Odysseus by telling Penelope to create a challenge that she knew only Odysseus could complete. This quote is extremely important as Athena changed the outcome of Odysseus's future with Penelope.

Without Athena, Penelope would not have known that Odysseus was actually Odysseus and who knows what would have happened in their relationship together. The quote explains the extreme metis that Odysseus had in order to string the bow but also explains that he strung the bow with significant ease. This is an ideal example of how the gods can be rewarding and friendly as long as they approve of your positive actions and good leadership.

However, if you make mistakes and show negative actions, the gods can be ruthless and punishing and can change the lives of the citizens forever. The second example of god intervention as an acknowledgment for Odysseus's positive actions takes place when Odysseus has enough courage to stand up for the men that suffered at Circe's house and go approach the goddess by himself.

Upon hearing Eurylochus's tale of what happened to half of his friends in Circe's house, Odysseus decides to go alone to meet the Goddess. Along his journey/trek he is met by Hermes, who is cunning and in disguise as a young boy who teaches him how to overcome Circe and gives him a magical cure to the goddesses drug called molly. Hermes, the god of trade, wealth, and luck, gives Odysseus this masterful advice for overcoming Circe, which exposes the fact that she is rewarding Odysseus for his strong leadership skills and incredible courage as he sets an example for his men as he takes on this

task of going to see the goddess alone himself which not many people are willing to do. This portrays that Odysseus has moments of great leadership and he is not afraid to stand up for Ithaca or his men. This also demonstrates that Odysseus is becoming more mature and is developing into an indestructible young man. Hermes gave the following advice to Odysseus on how to beat Circe " The gods call this plant Moly. It is hard for mortals to dig up, but gods are able to do everything". Hermes, after approving of Odysseus positive actions, is giving him advice on how to overcome Circe's trickery. Hermes gives Odysseus a plant called moly, that allows for Odysseus not to be tricked by Circe and to overcome her. This drug however, is only available to the Greek gods. In this special moment, Hermes is portraying how, if Odysseus shows positive actions and good leadership, he will receive good feedback and will get rewarded from the Greek Gods. Hermes changed the outcome of his visit with Circe and ultimately changed the outcome of his life by intervening at that exact specific moment when Odysseus was on his way to Circe. This demonstrates the fact that the gods can determine how a person's life plays out depending on if their invention is rewarding or punishing. This is a perfect example of how the gods can be rewarding and can come in handy as long as they approve of your positive actions and good leadership.

Although there are many examples of god intervention in response to recognition for Odysseus's positive actions, there are multiple instances where the Greek Gods intervene when Odysseus portrays negative actions. The most significant example of this occurs in book 12 when Odysseus has to

warn his men about the Sun God's Cattle. Odysseus advocated to his men, not to eat the Sun God's Cattle. Odysseus and his men create an agreement that they will not eat or kill the Sun God's Cattle. Odysseus failed to relay the fact that if they did eat and kill the Sun God's Cattle, there would be consequences from the Gods. During the night Zeus creates a storm that prevents them from leaving the island for a whole month, during which they run out of meat and are forced to eat fish. While he sleeps Odysseus's men break their promise to him and kill some of the Sun god's cattle. Even after being scolded by Odysseus they continue to dine on beef for an entire week. Zeus strikes the ship with a thunderbolt and the ship is torn to pieces and Odysseus' men drown. Zeus, the god of war, punishes Odysseus for his bad leadership as Odysseus failed to keep his men away from the Sun God's Cattle. This portrays the fact that the gods are unforgiving and will and aren't afraid to completely ruin the citizen's lives if they show negative actions that the gods do not approve of. Odysseus said to the reader " My men were thrown in the water, and bobbing like sea crows they were washed away on the running waves all around the black ship, and the god took away their homecoming." Odysseus is illustrating how his helpless men looked when they fell into the sea and started drowning. He is portraying how his men were bobbing up and down and were incredibly helpless as the waves were gargantuan compared to them and also voicing how the gods took away their return home.

Odysseus is relaying how ruthless the Greek Gods were as Zeus struck a thunderbolt and tore Odysseus ship apart and killed all of his men as they

drowned in the stormy waters. Zeus changed the outcome of Odysseus's life as he disapproved of his negative actions and poor leadership. This is a prime example of how the gods can be overbearing and can determine how a person's life plays out depending on if their intervention is rewarding or punishing. Godly intervention generally occurs in Homer's The Odyssey as a response to the actions of Odysseus, whether it is rewarding Odysseus after a positive action or punishing him after a negative action, which demonstrates that the personality of Odysseus was contradictory between effective leadership and poor leadership. There are many examples of when the Greek Gods intervene post Odysseus showing positive actions and great leadership such as Circe and Athena giving advice to Penelope and Odysseus which majorly affect the life of Odysseus. However, there are many moments from The Odyssey when the gods punish Odysseus for his demonstration of poor leadership or negative actions such as Zeus destroys Odysseus's ship and effectively drowning his men after Odysseus fails to relay important information about the Sun God's Cattle. Whether it be rewarding intervention or punishing intervention is in control of the Greek Citizens. The citizens control their destiny. This demonstrates, that the Greek Gods, can determine the lives of the citizens from Ithaca, either punishing or rewarding them after positive or negative actions.