

Odysseus as an epic hero

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



The Odyssey In Homer's *The Odyssey*, our main character, Odysseus, battles a feat of obstacles on the path back to his family and home. Throughout every disaster experienced in Book Two, Odysseus remains a true leader and strives to bring his people and himself home after many years. Odysseus has been known by many to be an epic hero, defined as someone who is higher than a normal human being but lower than a super human or a God. By using qualities such as curiosity, bravery, cleverness and nobility, a conclusion can be made. Book Two shows that Odysseus truly can not be anything but an epic hero and a leader to all. Curiosity is a much generalized characteristic that is displayed as neither a super-human trait nor a normal human trait. However, curiosity is of importance to a true leader and hero who must be willing to look beyond the obvious and to display bravery no matter what is found. Without curiosity, discoveries could never be made. Odysseus' curiosity is used when he is able to pose as one of Penelope's suitors. If his true identity had been known he would not have been able to show his skills with his bow. His curiosity to observe others under his disguise helped him in this scene as he was able to talk with his old servant and observe the other suitors. By observing under disguise, his curiosity was soothed as he discovered what had been going on with Penelope while he was gone (p. 936-943, lines 1082-1300, "The Test of the Great Bow" and "Death at the Palace"). He also displays curiosity when he poses as a beggar to his son right before the Gods show his true identity (p. 929-930, lines 935-990, "Meeting of Father and Son"). He is able to hear what has been going on in his home for the last few years without his son knowing who he really is. This soothes his curiosity for knowledge of the times since his departure.

Bravery is in my opinion the most important mark of a leader. Odysseus displays this trait throughout every scene in the Odyssey. Bravery is shown in scenes of Book Two, where he reveals his true identity (p. 931, lines 1006-1035), (p. 938, lines 1155-1159), and also in scenes where Odysseus slays Penelope's suitors (p. 942 lines, 1253-1260). In these lines Odysseus does not know the reactions he will receive from his family when his identity is revealed. He is brave in displaying who he really is and ridding himself of the beggar's disguise. He is also brave in fighting for his wife, whom he has not been in contact with her for many years, and in killing all the men who were looking to marry her. Nobility is a trait that not many people have. This makes it more of a super human quality. The dictionary defines noble as "the state or quality of being a sublime character". Odysseus displays nobility in many scenes of Part Two, just by being heartfelt and kind. The only time he is violent or rude is at a point where rudeness and violence are called upon. He then kills Penelope's suitors. Odysseus shows true nobility in parts such as p. 930, lines 977-978 and page 938, lines 1157-1159. In these lines Odysseus shows he is truly noble by treating all men as equals, although he is of higher class than most. On page 930 Odysseus shows true dignity and respect for his son. While dressed as a beggar, Odysseus gets out of his seat and offers it to his son as the boy enters the room. Although Odysseus has not had contact with his son and is dressed like a peasant, he shows a great amount of respect by standing and offering his chair to him. Odysseus shows the most nobility on page 938, where he meets his servant after many years. His servant, Eumaeus, expresses his joy of seeing Odysseus again and Odysseus returns the emotion. He hugs the old servant and both men burst

into tears. This scene displays love, kindness, and nobility in the best manner possible, not looking down on anyone and speaking to all as equals and friends. Cleverness is yet another trait that is not clearly defined as either a super human or a normal human characteristic. Odysseus shows cleverness throughout his role of playing someone else, and in the ways that he presents himself to all as a poor beggar and a suitor. Odysseus shows his cleverness in the scene " Meeting of Father and Son", where he reveals his true identity and is changed by the gods from a beggar to himself. He was clever in the manner of disguise and with his actions, while playing a part to his son, until he revealed himself (p. 930, lines 979-1004). Cleverness is also displayed when he plays the part of a suitor to reach Penelope (p. 942, lines 1254-1303). Odysseus truly is thinking in this scene with his bow, competing for Penelope. He does not just walk into the room and say " hey, I'm Odysseus, get out of my house"! He has a thought out plan and acts on this by playing a role so that he will be accepted as someone else. Because of his actions, he wins Penelope back and re-claims his kingdom. Throughout all scenes in Book Two, we see characteristics of Odysseus being displayed. By picking out which traits are normal human and super human, and applying them to the Odyssey, a conclusion is made. Odysseus can not be anything but a true epic hero. Odysseus, by definition, fits the part of an epic hero by being in a higher class than a mortal, displaying all characteristics spoken about above. All of the characteristics shown are rarely found in human beings but are rarely found in Gods either. The traits seem to be too good for a normal human and very few humans actually possess characteristics such as bravery or cleverness and especially nobility. They all rank just in the

middle where the definition of an epic hero should stand. The only trait a normal human does possess at times is curiosity. However, this is found to be a great trait to possess and all people, super or normal, do have this trait at times. Odysseus, as an epic hero, shows curiosity throughout his masterful disguise to observe his family, bravery, when revealing his true identity and fighting for his wife, cleverness, by not revealing his true identity until the right time, and nobility, by treating all men equal. Throughout all scenes, characteristics prove Odysseus to be an epic hero time and again, and with examples and textual evidence to back them up, he is.