

Odysseus' many mistakes essay sample

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



In Robert Fitzgerald's translation of *The Odyssey*, Odysseus leads his men through the unthinkable, and successfully gets them out of harms way because he utilizes his ability to formulate plans, and carry them out quickly and effectively. Throughout the epic, Odysseus makes numerous decisions that affect him and his men, these decisions have come to impact their journey home. In doing this, he has made several mistakes that Odysseus later learns from in order to make himself a better person, and a better leader. For instance, when Odysseus and his men land on the Island of the Cyclops, Odysseus decides to enter the caves out of curiosity. Also, once Odysseus and his men are inside the Cyclops' Cave, Odysseus starts taunting the Cyclops which harms them because the Cyclops starts throwing mountains at them in his anger. Then, while Odysseus' men slaughter the Sun God's cattle, Odysseus doesn't keep a good enough watch and falls asleep. As a result of all of these instances, his men were in harms way when they did not need to be.

For instance, Odysseus decides to explore the Island of Cyclops. He knew ahead of time that the island was dangerous, and that the Cyclops were savage creatures. He states, "...Cyclops have no muster and no meeting, no consultation or old tribal ways, but each one dwells in his own mountain cave..." (99-101). This quote proves that Odysseus knew that they were not living by any rules, and that they were savage creatures that had no way of possessing any traditions or religions. After stating that he knew that the Cyclops were dangerous, he says " We climbed, then briskly to the cave. But Cyclops had gone afield, to pasture his fat sheep, so we looked round at everything inside..." (140 - 42). This is proof that shows that Odysseus knew

that the Cyclops were deadly and could kill them, but Odysseus still insisted on exploring the caves. This was a bad decision because him, and his men could have gotten killed once they went inside. Odysseus learned from this, the fact that he should think before he makes an action or decision.

Another instance where he makes a bad decision, takes place once they are actually inside the Cyclops' Cave when Odysseus taunts them with the following: " You are a ninny, or else you come form the other end of nowhere..." (200 - 01). This proves that he was taunting the Cyclops without thinking. By doing this he put his men's lives at steak because the Cyclops then threw mountains at the men. Then after the Cyclops asks Odysseus about his ship, Odysseus states: " Neither reply nor pity came from him." (215). By saying this, he is in a sense, " dumb" because of the fact that the Cyclops did not have any reaction. This aggravated the Cyclops even more, which eventually pushed him into violently throwing mountains at Odysseus.

Another example of a mistake that Odysseus has made would be when his men slaughter the Sun God's cattle and Odysseus falls asleep. This was an error that Odysseus made because he did not think to stay awake to watch his men. For he knew that if he didn't, the Sun God would have gotten angry and taken the sun away from the earth. Once Odysseus awakens, he states: " O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, you made me sleep away this day of mischief!" (736 - 37). This says that he did not intentionally want to fall asleep, but do to his carelessness he did. Also, directly following Odysseus waking up, Zeus states: "...Let me throw down one white - hot bolt, and

make splinters of their ship in the wine-dark sea." (743 - 744). This proves that Zeus is mad at Odysseus, and that he wants to punish him for his actions. This is another instance where Odysseus makes a mistake that he learns from.

Throughout the epic, Odysseus is inclined to make a number of decisions throughout the epic that affect him, his men, and his legacy. Despite the fact that Odysseus makes numerous decisions that greatly benefit him, there are those that have been mistakes that could have cost them their lives. This is true in the instances of The Cyclops, and the Cattle of the Sun God. The lesson that he learns from all of these instances, is that he needs to think before he makes an action. These instances would clearly not have become a danger to Odysseus and his men, had he thought before he acted.

Work Cited

Homer "Odyssey." *Adventures in Reading*.

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