

# Watching the society changing: the odyssey, romeo and juliet, and for whom the be...

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Evolution and Darwinism are the products of what we now know as the human race. Due to our basic survival instincts, we know how to fulfill our desires to survive by obtaining necessities like food, water, and shelter. Society's development over time has made it easier for the human race to "co-exist" with nature in the modern world, and thence forth has created more wants to achieve. Now, instead of simplistic necessities, humans crave wealth, education, and most importantly entertainment. For this reason, there was an emergence of literature, where famous writers, like Homer, Shakespeare, and Hemingway, have artistically posed their thoughts and opinions, presenting society with classics, like *The Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*, storytelling is used to show characterization, character development, and different aspects of Greek culture.

Being an epic poem, it contains certain traits like the abundant list of characters and settings, the use of epic similes and other similar literary elements, and specifically the work's poetic narrative attribute. Even the characters within *The Odyssey* use stories and myths to relate and draw conclusions about other personages. In this way, characters like Athena (Pallas) and Odysseus are indirectly and directly characterized. For example, in book one we receive background information on Odysseus' sudden disappearance. Thinking he is dead, Athena mourns for Odysseus saying how ill his fate appears to be, " Must he, whose altars on the Phrygian shore, with frequent rites, and pure, avow'd thy power, be doom'd the worst of human ills to prove, unblest'd, abandon'd to the wrath of Jove?" (43). In this quote, she provides indirect and direct characterization. Athena's diction and tone

allows the reader to assume she is fond of Odysseus which is direct characterization. Although her thoughts are opinionated, because the quote is stated very early on, we can begin to form an image of Odysseus' heroic-like personality.

The ability to retell these stories and interconnect them with the situation a hand shows a character's level of knowledge. Seeing as Telemachus is the only one who specifically lacks rhetoric, the reader can also assume that his journey to find Odysseus, his father, is not only physical, but mental and even spiritual as well. This development of character is primarily from the internal conflict which Telemachus has presented himself with - will he ever live up to or surpass his fathers image? The Greek goddess Athena goes so far as to question his ability with her quote, " Few sons attain the praise of their great sires, and most their sires disgrace" (149). From the information we have received thus far, it appears that Telemachus is more prone to follow than lead unlike his father. His inability to speak and act also show what little individuality he possesses, showing he is still somewhat naïve. Therefore, one of the underlying goals in his odyssey is to define himself. The spiritual aspect is evidently demonstrated through the gods and goddesses throughout the book. They seem to test different characters by using disguises and trickery, and also through dreams. Within these visions of gods and/or goddesses, characters are often relayed a message or warning about their fate. If Telemachus truly trusts the gods, then he will blindly follow their every command, but if he is skeptical, then his actions could result in consequence and the discovery of his belief system.

The heavy emphasis that is held on certain elements in the *The Odyssey*, like spirituality, storytelling, and hosting, are key factors in discerning basic Greek culture. Gods and goddesses in Greek mythology portray religion with the belief in higher powers, and in many cases, they also explain their understanding of the world. People would create myths to justify the cause of natural disasters when in reality they were unknown (such as Zeus' lightning bolt and severe thunderstorms, or a bad harvest because of Demeter). At this period, the only way to spread stories was through storytelling, because no one could have recorded what they had heard yet. This gave stories more variety, which is why there are often different versions of Greek myths. The rules of being a good host are more directed towards the suitors. We are given examples of good hosting through characters like King Alcinous who willingly accommodates Odysseus with food, drink, and shelter. The irony in the suitors is related to their behavior and manners. Unlike most guests, they invite themselves and over stay their welcome, causing tension and conflict. The implement of this literary device is an example of the importance of being a good host in Greek culture.

The written form of artistic expression of ideologies became known as literature after the evolution of society due to easy access of our fundamental means of survival. *The Odyssey*, being one of the classics to come from the emergence of literature, shows the impact of literary devices like storytelling on characterization, character development, and Greek culture thought the book. Many main characters employ this device to both help understand the situation at hand and relate it to their lives in general.

The explanation specifically is more commonly used to display a basic comprehension of the mysterious ways of the world and a basis of Greek culture.