

# Essay on the theme of death in the odyssey by homer

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



Death is commonly reflected in Greek mythology. Many epics, myths, and short stories include death in their plot or theme. For instance, the short story of Pyramus and Thisbe conveys the idea that when one dies, it does not mean the other should too. However, the most notable Greek work of literature that addresses death is the *Odyssey*, by Homer. In Book XI of the epic, Odysseus travels down into the Land of the Dead to acquire important advice that would protect him, and his men on their journey back home. But along the way, Odysseus encounters numerous souls of the deceased. As he converses with the souls of his loved ones, Odysseus is slowly overcome with grief and misery. Consequently, the internal conflict that Odysseus faces in the Land of the Dead is coming to terms with the death of his friends and family.

To begin, Odysseus needed to come to terms with Elpenor, his former soldier's death. Before Odysseus left Kirke's island with the rest of his crew, they did not acknowledge that Elpenor was missing. As a result, when Odysseus noticed the soldier's soul approach him in the Land of the Dead he was shocked and heartbroken. The text states, " One shade came first- Eplenor, of our company, who lay unburied still on the wide earth, as we had left him-dead in Kirke's hall, untouched, unmourned, when other cares compelled us. Now when I saw him there I wept for pity and called out to him". In this quote, the author describes how other chores made Odysseus and his men turn a blind eye towards the absence of Elpenor. Instead of making sure everyone was present, Odysseus and his crew were too busy preparing to sail to the Land of the Dead.

Consequently, the former soldier was left there on the ground dying, with no one to help, grieve, or give a proper burial to him. Despite the tragic loss, Odysseus managed to accept his death in a short period of time; Elpenor only desired a burning and burial of his corpse. However, Odysseus did not accept the death of two others as quickly. Secondly, Odysseus needs to accept the death of his mother, Antikleia. When Odysseus traveled to the Land of the Dead, he did not expect to see her soul there; the last time Odysseus saw his mother she was healthy and living in Ithaca. But after chatting with her, Odysseus learns that she died because of her loneliness for him, "...only my loneliness for you, Odysseus, for your kind heart and counsel, gentle Odysseus, took my own life away".

In effect, Odysseus was filled with sorrow and agony. The text quotes, " I bit my lip, rising perplexed, with longing to embrace her, and tried three times, putting my arms around her, but she went sifting through my hands, impalpable as shadows are, and wavering like a dream. Now this embittered all the pain I bore, and I cried in the darkness". Here, the quote demonstrates how arduous it was for Odysseus to accept his mother's death; he was the reason behind her passing. Hence, the enormous soldier longed to embrace her, but no matter how hard he tried Antikleia's shadow floated through his hands. Suffering, Odysseus broke down into tears; he could not handle all the pain. On the whole, Odysseus has to come to terms with his mother's death, but there is one more he also struggles with. Finally, Odysseus needs to come to terms with the death of Agamemnon. Similar to Antikleia and Elpenor, he was unaware that his former comrade passed

away. The first time Odysseus saw Agamemnon's soul, tears began dripping down his grief-stricken face.

Unsurprisingly, after conversing about what happened to them while they were apart, Odysseus' mental toughness gave in. Homer wrote, " Gazing at him, and stirred, I wept for pity, and spoke across to him...So, we exchanged our speech, in bitterness, weighed down by grief, and tears welled in our eyes". Here, this quote illustrates Odysseus weeping in misery due to his comrade's death. Suddenly, the muscular, tall, and handsome soldier Agamemnon once knew turned into a helpless little child. The excerpt also demonstrates how important he was to him; it would require a lot more time to accept Agamemnon's death than normal.

Altogether, Odysseus struggles with coming to terms with Agamemnon's passing because they were very close. In conclusion, the internal conflict that Odysseus faces in the Land of the Dead is coming to terms with the death of his friends and family. This is challenging, as both his mother and former comrade died during the many years he was away from them.

Odysseus also lost a soldier due to ignorance. For Antikleia, he struggled with accepting her death because his absence was behind why she died. In Agamemnon's case, Odysseus lost a close friend and companion that helped him through the Trojan War. Finally, Odysseus lost one of his soldiers not in battle, but out of pure carelessness. If Odysseus managed to come to terms with their deaths, his inner conflict would almost, if not be resolved.