

# Odyssey and immortality

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



The idea of immortality has existed through the ages, from the ancient Egyptian's views on the afterlife and rebirth, all the way through to the Common Era with the Christian belief of eternal existence within heaven or hell. The Greeks felt that immortality could be achieved in a number of ways, including through heroic accomplishments in battle, dying a glorious death, being chosen by the gods, or through sport. The video documentary, *The Odyssey*, explains the legend of *The Odyssey* as written by Homer regarding the travels of Odysseus after the Battle of Troy, and the many obstacles that he must overcome on his quest to return home, however it also illustrates the idea of how immortality is achieved and what it truly means to live forever..

The video, *The Odyssey*, explains that the Greeks believed that immortality could be achieved through our accomplishments in either battle or in sport, and the legend addresses these ideas in two of the trials that Odysseus must overcome in order to return home. The first occurs when Odysseus and his men are washed ashore on the Island of the Cyclops. When they arrive, they discover a cave with supplies and begin eating and drinking, only to find that they belong to a giant Cyclops named Polyphemus, who has trapped them within the cave and plans to eat them, one by one. After tricking the cyclops into believing that his name was No-One Odysseus supplies the giant with wine, which causes him to fall asleep.

Odysseus then stabs Polyphemus in the eye, blinding him, which causes him to open the cave and run away screaming that No-One has blinded him.

Before leaving, Odysseus makes sure to encounter the cyclops again and advise him of his actual name, to ensure that he is remembered in infamy

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with the cyclops. The second trial occurs when Odysseus' raft is blown off course and he arrives in the Land of the Phaeacians, who are participating in Olympic-style games. Odysseus is coerced into joining the games, under threat of embarrassment, and is successful in besting the other participants, which earns him fame and permanent recognition. Both of these stories illustrate how the Greeks believed that immortality could be gained through accomplishments within battle or within sport, however to be sure, this version of immortality was only through fame or infamy, and not through the literal sense of physically living forever.

The video, *The Odyssey*, also delves into more physical versions of immortality as described in Homer's legend. One of these ideas occurs during the second stop of Odysseus' return home, after defeating Polyphemus on the island of cyclops. During this section of the story, Odysseus discovers a door to the underworld, where he meets three apparitions. The first is of Achilles, who after receiving massive praise from Odysseus, proclaims that the afterlife is not worth dying for despite his accomplishments in the physical world. The second is of Agamemnon, who explains that he is no longer a great king, and that his dedication to his accomplishments in battle resulted in him neglecting his wife who ultimately killed him. The third is Odysseus' mother, who died after he left for the battle of troy due to heartbreak as a result of him being gone for so long. The video characterizes these encounters as swaying Odysseus' belief that a fulfilling immortality can be achieved through physical accomplishments such as battles or conquests.

Another of the more physical interpretations of immortality, as illustrated in The Odyssey documentary, was Odysseus' encounter with Calypso. The video describes Odysseus encountering a fierce storm, which causes his ship to sink and all of his crew members to drown. After drifting endlessly, Odysseus washes ashore on an island, and is met by the goddess Calypso, who falls in love with him. The documentary indicates that it was common for gods or goddesses to become fixated on mortals due to their finite existence, which aided their ability to fully appreciate the world around them. After seven years with Calypso, Odysseus longs to return home to his wife and son, growing tired of the taste of immortality that she has given him. It is through this encounter, according to The Odyssey documentary, that Odysseus realizes that physical immortality is meaningless without being able to have a legacy or enjoy the little things of the world around him.

The documentary, The Odyssey, attempts to contrast the Greek's beliefs on the achievement of immortality through conquest or religious loyalty with how immortality is more commonly achieved through our legacies and the people that we leave behind when we pass away. It argues that the legend of the Odyssey was not only an action filled tale of adventure, but also how the beliefs of immortality shifted dramatically from a selfish idea, focusing on how the protagonist will be remembered by all of Greece based on his accomplishments, to a selfless one, concentrating on how he will be remembered by those in his immediate social orbit based on what he gave them or taught them.

In conclusion, the video *The Odyssey*, attempts to illustrate the age-old tale of *The Odyssey* as recorded by Homer, from Odysseus' outwitting of the cyclops, to escaping the beguilement of Calypso, to finally returning home. However, outside of just communicating the story of *The Odyssey*, it also describes the internal struggle of a man seeking immortality for the incorrect reasons and how he was moved to discover the true meaning of living forever, through those that we leave behind. While the story has existed for thousands of years, its popularity is not due to the death defying tales of a man overcoming monsters, gods, or the underworld. The popularity of this story has existed due to the moral theme that permeates through the entire legend, of focusing not on what we will be remembered for after we pass away, but instead concentrating on what we can do today to leave a positive impact on those around us.