

Epic hero comparison



Epic Heroes: From the Past and Today In the world today there are many people we view as heroes. Ordinary people, who stand out in the middle of a crowd, the kind of people we set out a day of the year as a national holiday in honor of them. Our heroes today are very similar to epic heroes in ancient epic poetry, they also are very different. In today's society, Heroes have qualities that resemble epic heroes in Greek culture. Epic heroes have very lucid qualities that make them an epic hero.

Epic heroes are significant and glorified, are on a quest, and are of superior or superhuman strength, intelligence, and/or courage. One of society's heroes that fit one, if not all, of these traits is Martin Luther King Jr. ; He as a man was significant and glorified to the African-American population in the needs of speaking out against civil rights. Mr. King was of superhuman courage because, even if he was to do it alone, he was going to stand up for what he believed in, going against the law enforcement and beliefs of others. Martin Luther King Jr. as also on a quest; he was on his self-driven quest to put an end to inequality in the United States. This is much like Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*. " My lady goddess, there is no cause for anger. My quiet Penelope-how well I know- would seem a shade before your majesty, death and old age being unknown to you, while she must die. Yet, it is true, each day I long for home, long for the sight of home" (Homer 754). Odysseus longed for home. Even though he was captured by a beautiful goddess, whom treated him very well, Odysseus was on a quest to see his wife and son, and he was not going to abort his mission. I carved beeswax into bits and rolled them in my hands until they softened — no long task, for a burning heat came down from Helios, lord of high noon. Going forward I

carried wax along the line, and laid it thick upon their ears” (Homer 781). An epic hero is also categorized as someone who is ethical, someone who risks death for glory or for the greater good of society, and is a strong and responsible leader. Odysseus shows this by protecting his men from the songs of the sirens.

Although they might not be considered heroes to some, the men and women who serve in the United States armed forces do fit all of these qualities too. They have to risk their lives in the battle field for society. They also are strong and responsible leaders in uniform. Any armed forces member is ethical in their thoughts, and they also perform brave deeds, which is also a characteristic of epic heroes. It takes courage to put your life in the way of harm to make sure the citizens of the United States can live free.

Military personnel have to have great strength as well as cerebral agility to perform on the battlefield as they do. “ And now I pondered how to hurt him worst, but if Athena granted what I prayed for. Here are the means I thought would serve my term: a club, or staff, lay there along the fold- an olive tree, felled green and left to season for Cyclops’ hand. And it was like a mast a lugger of twenty oars, broad in the beam— a deep-seagoing craft—might carry: so long, so big around it seemed.

Now I chopped out a six-foot section of this pole and set it down before my own men, who scraped it; and when they had it smooth, I hewed again to make a stake with a pointed end. I held this in the fires heart and turned it, toughening it then hid it, well back in the cavern, under one of the dung piles in profusion there. Now came the time to toss for it: who ventured along with

me? Whose hand could bear to thrust and grind that spike in Cyclops' eye, when mild sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it, the men I would have chosen won the toss— four strong men, and I made five as captain” (Homer 764).

The epic hero of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, showed his mental dexterity when he thought of the way to hurt the Cyclops and begin his escape from the Cyclops' cave. Just as American, heroic luminaries are similar to epic heroes in mental ingenuity and strength. They are also very different. “ A man in a distant field, no hearth fires near, will hide a fresh brand in his bed of embers to keep a spark alive the next day; so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself, while over him Athena showered sleep that his distress should end, and soon, soon.

In a quiet sleep she sealed his eyes” (Homer 754). “ Greathearted Odysseus, home at last, was being bathed now by Eurynome and rubbed with golden oil, and clothed again in a fresh tunic and cloak. Athena lent him beauty head to foot” (Homer 807). The goddess, Athena, steps in many times in the epic, the *Odyssey*. This is one factor that sets apart epic heroes from today's heroes and heroines. A quality of an epic hero is that within the story a god or goddess interferes with the plot to benefit the hero, otherwise called in poetry *deus ex machina*.

In today's commonwealth, Gods and goddesses are not known to step in and help with our heroes' problems. There is always religious faith, but in epic poetry the god or goddess does a visible impact, and that is not something that usually happens in the stories of modern day heroes. “ From every side

they came and sought the pit with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear. But presently I gave command to my officers to flay those sheep the bronze cut down, and make burnt offerings of flesh to the gods below — to sovereign Death, to pale Persephone.

Meanwhile I crouched with my drawn sword to keep the surging phantoms from the bloody pit till I should know the presence of Tiresias” (Homer 776). A common characteristic of heroes in epic poems is that they often experience a symbolic death or has to travel to the underworld. In the Odyssey, Odysseus travels to the underworld and make an offering to Persephone, wife of Hades, and Tiresias, the dead, blind prophet. Modern paladins do not travel to the underworld. Demigods of epics tend to have mythological qualities that are not related to avant-garde heroes.

Besides the mythological qualities that cause past epic heroes and current-day heroes to differ. Heroes over the years are very similar. They are significant and glorified, are on a quest, and are of superior or superhuman strength, intelligence, and/or courage. They are also defined as someone who is ethical, someone who risks death for glory or for the greater good of society, and is a strong and responsible leader many men and women are heroes, such as armed forces and Martin Luther King Jr. , and have qualities of epic heroes, like Odysseus, while also being very different.