# Odysseus v.s. beowulf essay

Beowulf and Odysseus have much in common as would be expected. When Beowulf is first introduced to the reader, he is described as being the mightiest man in Geatland, " There was no one else like him alive. In his day, he was the mightiest man on earth, high-born and powerful," (Heaney 15). Odysseus could be described very similarly, the mightiest man in Greece and also the smartest man in Greece. Also, the two of them are both on great quests, Beowulf to defeat Grendel and Odysseus to return home and reclaim his wife, Penelope.

Beowulf announces his intentions to the coast-guard as soon as he and his men reach the shore, " I come to proffer my wholehearted help and counsel. I can show the wise Hrothgar a way to defeat his enemy and find respite," (Heaney 21). Odysseus' intentions are also very clear, he has fought in the Trojan War and is now trying to return home after ten long years to fight off the suitors and reclaim his wife and land. To summarize, one could think that these two epic heroes are actually quite similar, but I would argue that they are in fact very different.

First of all, the reasons for their two quests are completely different. Odysseus is on his quest to gain immortality in the Trojan War and then to reclaim his wife and home. Beowulf is on his quest because he has heard of Grendel's attacks and feels that he must honor an old friendship by offering his help (Heaney 27). He even reinforces he reason for coming with his formal boast in the mead-hall, " I had a fixed purpose when I put out to sea. I meant to perform to the uttermost what your people wanted or perish in the attempt," (Heaney 43).

Secondly, Beowulf is known more for his strength, which shows the reader that the Anglo-Saxons valued strength in their heroes, and the reader witnesses this strength first-hand when he tears Grendel's arm off of his body (Heaney 57). Odysseus, on the other hand, is known more for his intelligence, showing that intelligence was highly valued among the Greeks. He always seems to come up with a clever solution to solve his problems, the Trojan Horse, escaping from Polyphemus and the Sirens all being examples.

Finally, although both are ultimately successful in their quests, I would argue that Beowulf is more successful in his quest for he " gets the job done" in a much shorter time than Odysseus does. Beowulf comes, sees and conquers, while the reader is not entirely sure that Odysseus will be successful for there are so many different challenges along the way for Odysseus. Beowulf is essentially more convincing in the success of his conquest. So In conclusion, while both Odysseus and Beowulf are both considered epic heroes, the two characters are in fact quite different.