

Amanda poseidon. in
regards to guests, or
uninvited



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Amanda PabesEnglish 1 -HonorsPeriod: 0507 December 2017Mr. Lifonti The Effects of XeniaThe altruistic act of hospitality, or lack of, may reveal one's level of civility and compassion. In Homer's The Odyssey, the author illustrates how xenia, which is Greek for hospitality, between a host and a guest affects both parties. Odysseus Laërtiadês, King of Ithaca, goes to war in Troy and does not return for two decades, enduring seemingly endless hardships in his effort to get back to his homeland and kingdom.

Amidst his travels, Princess Nausicaä and King Alcinoös of Scheria service him, incognizant of his true identity. Contrary to the royalty and wealth of the Phaeacians, Eumaeus is a swineherd who helps Odysseus in his endeavors while he is disguised as a homely beggar. Polyphemus, on the other hand, proves to be the epitome of a bad host, a barbaric Cyclops, but son of the divine, Poseidon. In regards to guests, or uninvited guests rather, the suitors of Ithaca invade Odysseus's house in his absence. Through the traditional Greek custom of xenia, Homer shows how one's decorum and hospitality is a prominent aspect of the story as it ultimately determines Odysseus's path on his journey back home and the wellbeing of his family.

The proper hospitality he is given progresses him further to his return home. Within Odysseus' travels, he is met with good xenia from the people of island Phaeacia and a swineherd in Ithaca. When Odysseus arrives on the land of the Phaeacians, Princess Nausicaä and King Alcinoös service him. When Nausicaä encounters Odysseus, she has him bathed, clothed, and fed. She displays proper xenia towards a stranger, as the Greeks would. King Alcinoös keeps him as a guest for dinner and entertainment, then helps him on his quest home. With King Alcinoös's consideration in the wellbeing of Odysseus,

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he announces, “‘ I propose now that we offer him a large tripod and a cauldron apiece. We will collect the cost afterwards in the town; it would be too bad to let each man bear it all himself.

” (Homer 149). King Alcinoös arranges a plan for his people to get Odysseus a ship, which he will eventually be sailed in to Ithaca. His hospitality is exemplary of the expectations held by the Greek god of hospitality, Zeus Xenios. The Phaeacians’ kindness is vital to the advancement of Odysseus’s return, such that if he doesn’t receive immense help, his absence would be greatly prolonged.

Moreover, Eumaeus, the swineherd, is yet another significant character in all the acts of hospitality within the story, as he bestows on Odysseus considerable xenia. Eumaeus gives Odysseus shelter, food, and even insists on him sleeping in a bed near the fireplace, while Eumaeus himself sleeps outside. Despite Odysseus’ physical appearance of a homely beggar, the swineherd still gives him the best of service. Odysseus, curious to see if Eumaeus would willingly take him in, says that he plans to go into town. In which Eumaeus responds, “” Nobody minds tha here, neither I nor my friends. Then if the master’s son comes along, he’ll give tha a coat and shirt to wear, and help tha wherever tha’d fain go.”(Homer 175) Reassuring beggar Odysseus that he is not a burden, Eumaeus exhibits his compassion as a person. His avid commitment to the concept of hospitality exemplifies his sympathy as a character.

His charitable treatment towards Odysseus contributes to the selflessness of the act, conveying his respect and courtesy. The hospitality Odysseus is met

with substantially brings him that much closer to returning to his homeland of Ithaca. The practice of xenia is done in the unknowing of whether or not the stranger who would approach one's door was a god in disguise. The help Odysseus receives from the swineherd and the Phaeacians significantly contribute to the advancement of his journey to reclaim his kingdom and reunite with his family.

Though Odysseus is fortunate to receive good xenia from his visits through the journey, he also manages to embark upon bad situations, including a Cyclops and invading suitors; who surround him with death, take advantage of his wife and son, Penelopeia and Telemachus Laertes, and make his return home longer by the year. Polyphemus, the Cyclops, is one of Odysseus' unfortunate encounters, as he unwillingly hosts Odysseus and his crew. As Odysseus's curiosity leads him to Polyphemus' cave, he decides to raid it.

Afterwards, he tests the Cyclops' level of hospitality, which leaves him with much his crew dead; just merely escaping with the remaining crew with combat and cleverness. Polyphemus murders some of his men when he, in Odysseus' words, "'..

. jumped up and reached out towards my men, grabbed two like a pair of puppies and dashed them on the ground: their brains ran out and soaked into the earth. Then he cut them up limb by limb..." (Homer 109).

Polyphemus' refusal to abide by the rules of xenia shows his ignorance and carelessness towards politeness and the gods. However, Odysseus and his crew were bad guests, as well. Nonetheless, both parties show bad

hospitality. Bad xenia has two sides, guest and host, and the suitors are an
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example of bad guests, using the obedient hosting of Odysseus' wife and son, Penelopeia and Telemachus, to their own benefit. Fifteen years after Odysseus went to Troy, the suitors of Ithaca began to invade his home.

Trying to take Odysseus' home and wife in Ithaca, the suitors plan to assassinate the son, Telemachus. In terms of their doings, "The suitors perfectly fit the role of the wicked and/or benighted individuals of the traditional tale, and their destruction proves a case of divine retribution in which sinners meet their just deserts." (Homer 14). The suitors deliberately take advantage of Penelope and Telemachus' xenia. Penelope is unable to 'evict' them, for her moral obligation to the gods is too important.

Penelopeia helplessly provides proper xenia to the men of Ithaca, while they remorselessly indulge in the food, drink, and home. Through the years Penelopeia's loyalty kept her faith in Odysseus, but as desperation and grief slowly get to her, she begins to cave in. Her hospitality and the suitors abuse of it show how Odysseus' family is affected. The events of hospitality Odysseus goes through determine the length of his absence. Homer shows how each event of hospitality affects Odysseus, making him one step closer or farther from reaching Ithaca or destroying his family and life in Ithaca. Eumaeus and the Phaeacians help Odysseus in obedience to the concept of xenia, as it is expected that one be a gracious host.

In their efforts to service Odysseus, he is brought closer to his sole intention of reclaiming his kingdom. Their good hospitality significantly helped Odysseus in light of the obstacles and death. Meanwhile, the suitors back in Ithaca essentially subjugate Odysseus' family, Penelopeia and Telemachus,

taking advantage of their hospitality. The cyclops, Polyphemus, executes improper xenia as a host, with the murder and malice. The suitors and Polyphemus represent the two opposite sides of hospitality, however both exemplary of bad xenia. Homer proves the impact of hospitality with Odysseus' setbacks from his entire crew of men dying to having his family invaded by suitors.

Hospitality throughout Odysseus' journey affect him greatly in either good ways or bad.