

# Odyessy college essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

There are many challenges throughout the Odyssey the most significant being his arrogance that Odysseus must overcome in order to reach home. In book 9, beginning with line 113 Odysseus and his men begin a journey in the land of the Kyklops. This set of challenges for Odysseus shows the reader the battle between arrogance and wisdom within Odysseus. The choices that Odysseus makes during this portion of his journey home will help him to realize his arrogance and the downfalls of yielding to it, which he must overcome to regain his kingdom and property from the suitors.

When Odysseus first decides to explore the nearby island he makes a wise decision to take only his own ship and company. The reason he does this is to book 9; lines 187-189 " find out what the mainland natives are- for they may be wild savages, and lawless, on hospitable and God fearing men". This proves to be a wise decision because the natives are Kyklops. Kyklops have no laws, no councils, and no interest in hospitality or civility of any kind. A reader could reasonably believe that Odysseus decision to only bring his own ship and company prolongs the lives of the men he left behind.

Beginning with line 201 in book 9 Odysseus begins to describe the type of men that resides in the cave he is now in. He describes the absentee resident of the caves by what he sees in the cave. He describes the resident as being in the cave alone, remote, knowing nothing but savagery. He goes further to call him a huge brute. Once again Odysseus shows his wisdom in leaving all but twelve of his men at the ship to go ahead. In line 229 through 231 he states " for in my bones I knew some towering brute would be upon us soon- all outward power, a wild man, ignorant of civility". His men want to plunder and leave before the resident returned. This desire is in direct

contrast to what they did in Ismarus when he advised them to leave Ismarus immediately with their riches. Furthermore, Odysseus show his arrogance when he ignores the advice of his men to take the plunder and leave but instead opts to stay and wait for the caveman to return home to test the owners hospitality. Odysseus makes a costly mistake in his decision, all of the evidence he sees in the cave points to a savage and uncivil being, but Odysseus, in his arrogance, elects to wait for the caveman’s return anyway. A reader could use these instances to support a theory that it is better to “quit while you’re ahead”.

Starting in line 273 when the Kyklops sees Odysseus and his men. The one eyed giant is curious at first as to who they are. He begins in line 274 by asking “strangers who are you? And where from?” Odysseus responds to the questions of the one eyed giant by describing in great detail where they are from and who they are but becomes arrogant in the end of his description by instructing the Kyklops on what is acceptable behavior according to Zeus. Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant, responds by insulting Odysseus by calling him a “ninny”. This is a sign of arrogance and disrespect because of the brave and heroic things Odysseus did in the Trojan War. By insulting Odysseus and disregarding without thought of the statement made by Odysseus concerning the “care of the Gods courtesy”. Polyphemus portrays two characteristics of his personality; brute strength and a lack of respect for the Gods.

In lines 307 through 311 Odysseus tells Polyphemus that Poseidon had destroyed his ship but that he and his men had been spared. These lines provide a few important details. The first detail is the respect that is shown

for the powers of Poseidon by Odysseus. It also gives warning to the one-eyed giant that these men were spared by Poseidon and therefore should be spared by the Kyklops. Another significant factor is it foreshadows the fate of Odysseus ships and crew, while singling out Odysseus himself.

In lines 465 to 475 Odysseus describes how he tied sheep together three abreast and slung a man under each in order to escape in the morning when Polyphemus lets his flock out in the morning to graze. Special attention was made of the fact that Odysseus took the choice of the flock, the woolliest ram, for him to escape under. He does not take the best of the flock out of arrogance but instead to show his position of leadership and nobility. That morning when the giant let his flock out to graze Odysseus and his ram were the last to escape the captivity of Polyphemus. This symbolizes that Odysseus had a greater concern for the welfare of his men than he did for himself, a trait of a great leader and a hero.

After escaping from Polyphemus' cave Odysseus allows his arrogance to overtake his wisdom and shouts taunts at the one-eyed giant. The Kyklops responds by breaking away a hilltop and throwing it at the departing ship of Odysseus almost beaching the target. Even though Odysseus men beg him not to continue to taunt the monster; Odysseus can not overcome his arrogance and shouts his true name and identity to Polyphemus. Odysseus gives his identity to Polyphemus not out of arrogance as with his name but merely as a way of the way things were done in that period of time. This lack of wisdom and display of arrogance brings upon him the wrath of Poseidon on behalf of his son, Polyphemus.

Odysseus learns throughout this portion of his journey that it is wiser to be humble than it is to be arrogant towards others. In every instance where Odysseus, his men, or Polyphemus become arrogant it cost the offender a price. Odysseus arrogance cost him all of his men and ships, he carries this lesson with him and learns from it. When Odysseus shows his humility he fares better than when he lets his arrogance win the day. The lesson of arrogance enables him to defeat the disrespectful and arrogant suitors so that he can regain control of his kingdom and property. The moral of the Odyssey being that mans own arrogance is his worst enemy

Bibliography: